THE HERITAGE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/heritageothersto0000guyd

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

THE HERITAGE

And Other Stories

Translated by
ALBERT M. C. McMASTER, B.A.
A. E. HENDERSON, B.A.
MME. QUESADA and Others

STANDARD EDUCATION SOCIETY
PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

Copyright, MCMXI
Copyright, MCMXXII
by ORSAMUS TURNER HARRIS

Printed in the
United States of America

CONTENTS

	NO. OF PAGES
THE HERITAGE	77
YVETTE SAMORIS	6
THE MODEL	9
MY TWENTY-FIVE DAYS	11
"THE TERROR"	9
LEGEND OF MONT ST. MICHEL	6
A NEW YEAR'S GIFT	9
FRIEND PATIENCE	8
ABANDONED	11
THE MAISON TELLIER	33
DENIS	9
MY WIFE	9
THE UNKNOWN	7
THE APPARITION	9
CLOCHETTE	7
THE KISS	6
THE LEGION OF HONOR	8
THE ORPHAN	9
THE BEGGAR	7

Guy de Maupassant

THE HERITAGE

PART I

ALTHOUGH it was not yet ten o'clock, the clerks were pouring in through the building of the Ministry of Marine, hastening from all corners of Paris, for New Year's Day, the time for zeal and promotion, was approaching. The noise of hurried footsteps filled the vast building, which was pierced by countless doors giving entry to the different offices.

Each man entered his compartment, shaking hands with those who had already arrived, took off his jacket and put on his office coat; then he sat down at his desk, where a pile of papers awaited him. Then the clerks visited one another to learn the news. They first asked whether the manager was there, whether he appeared to be in good humor, whether the mail was large.

The order clerk for "general business," M. César Cachelin, a former non-commissioned officer of marines who had become head clerk through length of service, was registering in a large book everything the ushers brought in. Opposite him the copying clerk, Old Man Savon, who was known throughout the whole ministry for his conjugal troubles, was slowly copying a message from the man-

ager, his body bent, looking from the corner of his eye in the stiff position of an accurate copyist.

M. Cachelin, a fat man with short, straight white hair, was talking while accomplishing his daily task: "Thirty-two dispatches from Toulon. We get as many from that port as we do from any other four put together." Then he asked Old Man Savon the question he asked him every morning: "Well, papa, how's the missus?"

The old man answered without interrupting his work: "Monsieur Cachelin, you know that this subject is very distasteful to me."

And the order clerk began to laugh, just as he laughed every day when he heard this same sentence.

The door opened and M. Maze entered. He was a dark, handsome fellow, who dressed with exaggerated elegance, and considered his physique and manners far above the position he occupied. He wore large rings, a heavy watch chain, a monocle, for style, as he took it off to work, and he had a peculiar motion of his wrists in order to show his cuffs, decorated with big china cuff-buttons.

As soon as he reached the door he asked: "Is there much work to-day?" M. Cachelin answered: "The most still comes from Toulon. It's easy to see that New Year's Day is approaching; they are very busy over there."

Another clerk, M. Pitolet, a joker and a witty fellow, appeared in turn, and laughingly asked: "And do you think that we are not busy here?"

Then, drawing his watch, he declared: "Seven minutes to ten, and everybody here! And I'll wager that His Dignity, Monsieur Lesable was here at

nine o'clock, at the same time as our illustrious manager."

The order clerk stopped writing, put his pen behind his ear, and leaning over the desk, said: "Oh, if that fellow doesn't succeed it won't be because he does not try."

M. Pitolet, sitting on the corner of the table and swinging his legs, answered: "But he will succeed, Papa Cachelin; you may be sure that he will succeed. I'll bet twenty francs to one sou that he will be manager inside of ten years!"

M. Maze, who was rolling a cigarette and warming his legs at the fire, exclaimed: "Bah! Personally, I should prefer to work the rest of my life for twenty-four hundred francs rather than to kill myself the way he is doing."

Pitolet turned on his heel and answered in a mocking tone: "Nevertheless, my dear fellow, this day, the twentieth of December, you are here before ten o'clock."

The other merely shrugged his shoulders indifferently, saying: "Of course, I have no desire for everybody to pass over my head. As long as you come here in time to see the sun rise I will do as much, although I deplore your zeal. Between that and calling the manager 'dear master,' as Lesable does, and leaving at half-past six and taking work home with him, there is quite a difference. Besides, I belong to society, and I have other obligations that take up my time."

M. Cachelin had stopped registering, and was dreaming, with his looks lost in the distance. Finally he asked: "Do you think that he will be promoted again this year?"

Pitolet answered: "I should say he would. He's not clever for nothing."

The conversation turned to the eternal topic of promotion and gratuities, which had been occupying this great hive of government clerks from the first floor to the roof. They computed chances, guessed at amounts, weighed merits, and indignation was expressed over foreseen injustice. Discussions left off the day before were continued, and they would be taken up again the following day with the same reasoning, the same arguments and the same words.

A new clerk entered, small, pale, delicate-looking. It was M. Boissel, who lived as in a novel by Alexander Dumas, Sr. Everything for him became an extraordinary adventure, and every morning he would relate to Pitolet strange things that had occurred to him the evening before, imaginary tragedies in his house, weird cries in the street, which had made him open his window at twenty minutes past three in the morning. Every day he had separated two men fighting, stopped runaway horses, saved women in danger, and although he was deplorably weak he would continually boast of the exploits which he had accomplished with the strength of his arms.

As soon as he understood that they were talking of Lesable he exclaimed: "Ah! some day I'm going to tell that rascal what I think of him, and if he gets promoted before I do I'll shake him up so that he'll never want to do so again!"

Maze, who was smoking, grinned, saying: "You would do well to begin to-day, for I have good in-

formation that you are to be set aside this year to give way to Lesable."

Boissel raised his hand, exclaiming: "I swear that if——"

The door once more opened, and a little man with side whiskers like a marine officer or a lawyer, with a very high collar, who rattled off his words as if he never could find time to finish what he had to say, entered with a preoccupied air. He shook hands like a man whose time is not his own. Going up to the order clerk, he said: "My dear Cachelin, will you give me the Chapelou file, Toulon, A. T. V. 1875?"

The clerk stood up and reached for a book above his head. From it he took a package wrapped up in a blue shirt, and presented it, saying: "Here, Monsieur Lesable. I suppose you are aware that the manager took three dispatches from this file yesterday?"

"Yes, I have them, thank you."

The young man left again with a hurried step. He was hardly out of sight when Maze exclaimed: "What style! He looks as if he were already manager."

Pitolet replied: "Patience! patience! He will be manager before you are."

M. Cachelin had not resumed his writing. He looked as if something were worrying him. At last he exclaimed: "That fellow has a wonderful future."

Maze murmured in a disdainful tone: "I suppose he has—for those who consider the ministry a career; for others—it's not very much."

Pitolet interrupted him: "Perhaps you intend to become ambassador?"

The other made an impatient gesture: "As far as I am concerned I don't care. But I will maintain that the position of office manager will never amount to anything in the world."

Father Savon, the copying clerk, had not stopped working. But for the last few minutes he had dipped his pen in the ink several times in succession, and then obstinately wiped it on the damp sponge, without being able to trace a single letter. The black liquid ran down along the metal point and fell in round blots on the paper. The old man, astonished and in despair, looked at the dispatch he was copying, which he would have to do over again, as he had been forced to do so many others in the last few days; and he said in a low, sad voice: "There's some more adulterated ink."

A burst of laughter followed this exclamation. Cachelin was shaking the table; Maze was bent in two, as if he were about to enter the chimney backward; Pitolet was stamping, coughing, waving his right hand around as if it were wet, and Boissel himself was choking, although he usually took things tragically rather than otherwise.

But Old Man Savon wiped his pen on the end of his coat and continued: "There is no cause for laughter. I am obliged to do my work over two or three times."

He drew another sheet of paper from his portfolio, adjusted the carbon, and began: "Monsieur le Minister and dear colleague. . . ." The pen now held the ink and clearly traced the letters. The

old man took up his pose again and continued copying.

The others had not stopped laughing. They were choking. This had been happening for the last six months, and the old man could never see the joke that they were playing on him. It consisted in pouring a few drops of oil on the damp sponge. The steel was thus covered with a greasy liquid, and no longer held the ink; then the old clerk would spend hours in bemoaning his troubles, using up whole boxes of pens and bottles of ink; and at last he would declare that the office supplies were altogether inferior.

Then the joking was turned into a regular obsession and torture. Gunpowder was mixed in the old man's snuff, drugs were poured into the water of which he took a glass from time to time, and they made him believe that since the Commune the majority of materials in daily use had been thus adulterated by the socialists in order to harm the government and bring about a revolution.

As a result he had conceived a fierce hatred against anarchists, whom he believed to be ambushed everywhere, and he had a mysterious fear of some unknown and terrible person.

A bell rang sharply in the hall. This angry ring of the manager, M. Torchebeuf, was well known, and every one rushed for his own door in order to reach his compartment.

Cachelin began to register again, then he put his pen down and took his head in his hands, in order to think.

He was ruminating over an idea which had been worrying him for some time. An old non-commis-

sioned officer, retired after receiving three wounds, one in Senegal and two in Cochin China, and appointed to the ministry as an exceptional favor, he had been forced to endure many hardships, griefs and miseries in his long career of subordinate; therefore he considered authority—official authority—as the finest thing in the world. An office manager seemed to him to be a superior being, living in a sphere of his own; and those clerks of whom he heard people say, "He is shrewd, he will advance quickly," seemed to him to belong to another race, to be of an entirely different nature from his own.

He therefore looked upon his colleague, Lesable, with a superior consideration which bordered upon veneration, and he harbored the secret and persistent desire of seeing him marry his daughter. She would be rich some day, very rich. This was known throughout the ministry, for his sister, Mademoiselle Cachelin, was worth a million—a whole solid, intact million—acquired by love, it was said, but purified by devotion. The old maid had led a gay life and had retired with five hundred thousand francs, which she had more than doubled in eighteen years, thanks to a rigid economy and to tastes which were more than frugal. She had been living for a long time with her brother, who was a widower with one child, a young girl, Coralie; but she contributed only a very little to the household expenses, hoarding and increasing her gold and continually repeating to Cachelin: "That makes no difference, since it's for your daughter; but marry her off quickly, because I wish to see grand-nephews. It is she who will give me the joy of embracing a child of her own blood."

The thing was known throughout the office, and there was no lack of suitors. It was even said that Maze himself, the handsome Maze, the pride of the office, was hanging round Old Man Cachelin with a visible intention. But the old sergeant, a man who had traveled under many suns, wanted a man with a future, a man who would become a manager and who would reflect glory on him, César, the old non-com. Lesable would suit him admirably, and he had been trying for a long time to attract him to his house. Suddenly he straightened up, rubbing his hands. He had found a way.

He knew every one's weakness. Lesable could be captured only by professional vanity. He would go to him and ask him for protection, just as one goes to a senator, or to a deputy, or to some other person of high rank.

As he had not had an increase of salary for twelve years, Cachelin considered himself pretty certain of obtaining one this year. He would therefore pretend to believe that he owed it to Lesable, and then in return he would invite him to dinner.

As soon as his plan was conceived he began to carry it out. He took off his office coat, drew on his street jacket, and, taking all the registered matter which belonged to his colleague's business, he hastened to the office which this clerk occupied by himself by special favor as a reward for his zeal and valuable services.

The young man was writing at a large table on which lay open files and papers numbered in red or blue ink. As soon as he saw the order clerk enter, he asked in a familiar tone, wherein a certain con-

sideration could be noticed: "Well, my dear fellow, are you bringing me much business?"

"Yes, quite a little. And then I would like to speak to you."

"Sit down, my friend; I am listening."

Cachelin sat down, coughed, looked worried and exclaimed in a shaky voice: "Monsieur Lesable, this is what is bringing me. I will come straight to the point. I will be perfectly frank, as an old soldier should be. I have come to ask a small service of you."

"What is it?"

"To cut a long story short, I need an increase of salary this year. I have no one to protect me, and I thought of you."

Lesable blushed a little, surprised, pleased, full of vain confusion. Nevertheless he answered: "But I am nobody here, my friend. I am much less than you, who will some time be head clerk. I can do nothing. Believe me——"

Cachelin interrupted him with a respectful brusqueness: "Tut, tut! The chief will listen to you, and if you will only say a word for me all will go well. Just think! I am entitled to my pension in eighteen months, and it will mean five hundred francs less if I get nothing on the first of January. I know that every one says 'Cachelin is well off; his sister is worth a million.' That may be; my sister may have a million, and it grows, but I get none of it. It's for my daughter, that's true, but my daughter and I are two different persons. A deal of good it will do me to see my daughter and my son-in-law traveling about in a coach and four when

I have nothing in my stomach. You understand the situation, don't you?"

Lesable immediately answered: "That's true, quite true—what you say. Your son-in-law may not be well disposed toward you. And, anyhow, one always feels more comfortable not to owe anything to any one. I have promised to do my best for you. I will speak to the manager and explain your case to him. You may count on me!"

Cachelin arose, took his colleague's hands, pressed and shook them in a military manner, mumbling: "Thank you, thank you! You may count on me if the occasion ever—if I can ever——" He did not finish, as he did not find any good ending for his sentence; and he walked away with the rhythmic tread of an old soldier. But in the distance he heard the angry ringing of a bell, and he began to run, for he had recognized it. It was the chief, M. Torchebeuf, who was ringing for his order clerk.

A week later Cachelin found the following note in his mail:

"My Dear Colleague: I am pleased to announce to you that the Minister, on the recommendation of your director and our chief, yesterday signed your nomination as chief clerk. To-morrow you will receive the official notification. Until then you know nothing, do you? Very respectfully yours,

"Lesable."

César immediately ran to his young colleague's office, thanked him profusely, offered his eternal devotion and overwhelmed him with gratitude.

On the following day it became known that MM.

Lesable and Cachelin had both been promoted. All the other employés would have to wait for another year and as compensation would receive a gratuity which varied from five to three hundred francs.

M. Boissel declared that he would lie in wait for Lesable at the corner of his street at midnight some night and give him such a thrashing that he never would forget. The other clerks were silent.

The following Monday, as soon as Cachelin arrived, he went to his protector's office, entered solemnly and said in a ceremonious tone: "I hope that you will do us the honor of dining with us during Epiphany. You may choose your own day."

The young man, a little surprised, raised his head and looked at his colleague. Then he answered without turning his eyes away, in order better to read the other man's thought: "But, my friend, I—all my evenings are taken up for some time."

Cachelin insisted in a good-humored tone: "Oh, you wouldn't refuse us after the service which you have just rendered me. I beg of you for my own sake and that of my family not to refuse."

Lesable hesitated, perplexed. He had understood, but he did not know what to answer, as he had not had time to think the matter over and to weigh the pros and cons. At last he thought: "I am not taking any risk by going to dinner"; and he accepted with a satisfied look, naming the following Saturday. He added, smiling: "So that I shall not have to get up too early the following day."

THE HERITAGE

PART II

M. Cachelin lived in a little apartment on the fifth floor of a building at the upper end of the Rue Rochechouart. It had a balcony, from which one could see the whole of Paris. There were three bedrooms, one for his sister, one for his daughter and one for himself; the dining-room was used also as a drawing-room. During the whole week he was busy making preparations for this dinner. The *menu* was discussed at great length, to order to have a dinner that would be substantial and at the same time choice. The following dishes were decided upon: A consommé with eggs, relishes, shrimps, sausages, lobster, a fine chicken, some canned peas, *pâté de foies gras,* a salad, ices and dessert.

The *pâté* was bought from a neighboring delicatessen shop, with the recommendation to have it of the best. It cost three francs fifty. As for the wine, Cachelin applied to the wine merchant of the corner, who supplied him with the red beverage with which he ordinarily quenched his thirst. He did not wish to go to some large establishment, giving the following reason: "The little retailers find few occasions to sell their good wines. For this reason they are kept very long in the cellar, and they become very fine."

He returned home early on Saturday to make sure that everything was ready. His servant, who opened the door, was as red as a beet, for her oven, which had been lighted since noon for fear that she would not be ready, had roasted her face all day; emotion had also played its part.

He entered the dining-room in order to look over things. In the middle of a little room a round table made a big white patch under the bright light of a lamp covered with a green shade. On the four plates lay napkins folded like a bishop's miter by Mademoiselle Cachelin, the aunt, and on either side were knives and forks of plated metal and two glasses, one large and one small. César found this insufficient and called: "Charlotte!"

A door to the left opened and a little old lady appeared. She was ten years older than her brother, and she had a narrow face framed by white hairs which was made wavy by curl papers. Her thin voice seemed too weak for her bent body, and she walked with a slightly dragging step and tired gestures.

When she was young they had said of her: "What a dainty little creature!"

She was now a thin old woman, very neat, as a result of her early training, headstrong, stubborn, narrow-minded, precise and easily irritated. She had become very pious and seemed completely to have forgotten the adventures of bygone days. She said: "What do you want?"

He answered: "I don't think the two glasses make much effect. Suppose we were to serve a little champagne. It would not cost more than three or four francs, and we could put on the thin glasses. It would entirely change the appearance of the table."

Mamemoiselle Charlotte continued: "I don't see the use of all this expense. But as you are the one who is paying for it, it is none of my business."

He hesitated and tried to convince himself by

saying: "I assure you that it will be much better and that it will brighten us up a little for the Twelfth-Night cake." It was this argument that decided him. He took his hat and went downstairs again, and after five minutes he returned with a bottle having on its side a large white label with fancy ornaments bearing the following inscription: *"Grand vin mousseux de Champagne du Comte de Chatel-Rénovau,"* and Cachelin declared: "It cost me only three francs, and they say it is excellent."

He took the glasses out of the cupboard and placed them on the table.

The door to the right opened. His daughter entered. She was a tall, plump, rosy, handsome girl, with brown hair and blue eyes. A simple dress outlined her well-rounded and supple figure; her strong voice was almost manly and had those deep tones which make the nerves tingle. She exclaimed: "Gracious! champagne! What joy!" And she clapped her hands in childlike glee.

Her father said to her: "I wish you to be especially agreeable to this gentleman, who has done me a great favor."

She began to laugh a sonorous laugh, which seemed to say: "I know all about it."

The front doorbell rang; doors were opened and closed. Lesable appeared. He wore evening dress, a white cravat and white gloves. He produced quite a sensation. Cachelin had sprung forward, confused and delighted, exclaiming: "But, my friend, this was to be entirely informal; you see I am wearing my business suit."

The young man answered: "I know, you told me, but I am always accustomed to dress in the eve-

ning." He bowed to every one, his opera hat under his arm, a flower in his buttonhole. César introduced him: "My sister, Mademoiselle Charlotte—my daughter, Coralie, whom we familiarly call Cora."

Everybody bowed. Cachelin continued: "We have no drawing-room. It's a little annoying, but we are used to it."

"It's charming!" Lesable replied.

They relieved him of his hat, which he wished to keep. Then he began to take off his gloves. Everybody was seated; they were observing him across the table in silence. Cachelin asked: "Did the chief stay late? I left a little early in order to help the ladies."

Lesable answered in an offhand manner: "No. We left together, as we had to discuss the matter of the tarpaulin for Brest. It's a very complicated affair, and is going to give us much trouble."

Cachelin turned to his sister and informed her: "It is Monsieur Lesable who takes care of all the difficult matters of the office. He is the manager's right-hand man."

The old maid bowed politely and declared: "Oh, I know that monsieur is very capable."

The servant entered, pushing the door with her knee and holding in the air a large tureen of soup. Then the host cried: "Come! let us sit down! If you will place yourself there, Monsieur Lesable, between my sister and my daughter. I suppose that you are not afraid of the ladies." And dinner began.

Lesable tried to be amiable, with a little air of conceit, almost of condescension, and he kept looking at the young girl from the corner of his eye,

marveling at her freshness and her attractive air of health. Mademoiselle Charlotte tried to be pleasant, knowing the intentions of her brother, and she carried on the commonplace conversation on all the ordinary subjects of the day. Cachelin, delighted. was talking loudly, joking, pouring out the wine that he had bought an hour before at the wine merchant's at the corner, saying: "A small glass of this Burgundy, Monsieur Lesable? I don't claim that it's of a great vintage, but it is good. It has been kept quite a time in the cellar, and it is pure—I guarantee that. We get it from friends who live there."

The young girl said nothing, blushing slightly, a little timid, embarrassed by the proximity of this man, whose thoughts she suspected.

When the lobster appeared César declared: "There is a person whose acquaintance I shall make with pleasure." Lesable smiled and told of an author who called the lobster "the cardinal of the seas," not knowing that this animal was red only when cooked. Cachelin began to laugh with all his might, repeating: "Ha! ha! ha! that's a good one!" But Mademoiselle Charlotte became furious and cried: "I can't see what comparison could have been drawn. That gentleman was very improper. I can appreciate any kind of joke, but I refuse to have the clergy made ridiculous in my presence."

The young man, who wished to please the old maid, took advantage of the occasion to express his belief in the Catholic faith. He spoke of the bad taste of people who speak lightly of great truths. And he concluded by saying: "I respect and revere

the religion of my forefathers. I have been brought up in it, and I shall stick to it until death."

Cachelin was no longer laughing. He was rolling pellets of bread and murmuring: "Quite right, quite right!" Then he changed the conversation, which was boring him, and with the bent of mind natural to those who do the same work every day, he exclaimed: "How angry the handsome Maze must have been not to get his promotion!"

Lesable smiled, saying: "What can you expect? Every one gets awarded according to what he does." And the conversation turned on the ministry, a topic which delighted everybody, as the women knew almost as much about the clerks as Cachelin himself, as they had heard about them every evening. Mademoiselle Charlotte took a great interest in Boissel, on account of the adventures which he told and of his romantic spirit. Mademoiselle Cora took a secret interest in the handsome Maze. Neither of them had ever seen these people. Lesable spoke of them with a certain tone of superiority, just as a minister might speak when passing judgment on his employés. All were listening to him as he was saying: "Maze has indeed a certain merit, but if he wishes to arrive he will have to work harder. He likes society and pleasure—all that distracts the mind. He never will get far, through his own fault. He may perhaps get to be assistant manager, thanks to some outside influence, but nothing more. As for Pitolet, I must admit that he does his work well, but he has no depth. Everything is on the surface with him. He is the kind of fellow who never could be put at the head of anything important, but who

could be well made use of by an intelligent chief who could prepare all his work for him."

Mademoiselle Charlotte asked: "And how about Monsieur Boissel?"

Lesable shrugged his shoulders and answered: "A sorry chap, a sorry chap! He can see nothing in its correct proportions. He imagines wild-goose stories. He is of absolutely no use to us."

Cachelin began to laugh and declared: "But the best of all is Father Savon." And everybody laughed.

Then the conversation turned on the theaters and the plays. Lesable criticized dramatic literature with the same tone of authority, classifying the authors clearly, picking out the strong and the weak points of each one with the assurance of a man who considers himself infallible and universal.

The roast had been taken off. César was now taking the crust from the *foies gras* with the utmost precaution, in order to give a good opinion of the contents. He said: "I don't know how this one is going to be. But they are usually perfect. We receive them from a cousin who lives in Strasburg." Each one ate the little delicacy from the yellow jar with respectful deliberation.

When the ice appeared it was a disaster. It had melted to a sauce, a soup, a clear liquid floating around in the dish. The little servant had asked the baker's boy, who had arrived at seven o'clock in the morning, to take it out of the mold himself, for fear that she would not know how to do it. Cachelin, in despair, wished to take it back, but he grew calm at the thought of the Twelfth-Night cake, which he cut with mystery, as if it were a state secret. Each one

looked at the symbolic cake, and it was passed round with the order for every one to close his eyes while choosing a piece.

Who would draw the bean? A foolish smile was on everybody's face. M. Lesable uttered a little "ah!" of surprise and drew from his mouth a large white bean still covered with pastry. Cachelin began to applaud and then cried: "Choose the queen! choose the queen!"

The king hesitated a little, wondering whether it would not be tactful to choose Mademoiselle Charlotte. She would be flattered and won over to his side! And then he decided that he actually had been invited to meet Mademoiselle Cora and that he would look like a simpleton if he chose the aunt. Therefore he turned to his young neighbor and presented her the symbolic bean, saying: "Mademoiselle, allow me to offer you this!"

They looked each other full in the face for the first time. She said: "Thank you, monsieur!" and received the emblem of dignity.

He was thinking: "This girl is pretty. She has superb eyes. She is a fine specimen of womanhood!" A sharp detonation made both women jump. Cachelin had just uncorked the champagne, which was bubbling over and flooding the table. Then the glasses were filled with froth and the host declared: "It is easy to see that it is of a good quality!" But as Lesable was about to drink in order to stop his glass from overflowing, César cried: "The king drinks! the king drinks! the king drinks!" And Mademoiselle Charlotte, also excited, piped in her shrill voice: "The king drinks! the king drinks!"

Lesable emptied his glass with assurance, and,

placing it back on the table, he exclaimed: "You see that I am not timid!" Then he turned to Mademoiselle Cora, crying: "Your turn, mademoiselle!"

She wished to drink, but when everybody began to cry, "The queen drinks! the queen drinks!" she blushed, began to laugh and put her glass down in front of her.

The end of the dinner was full of gaiety. The king showed himself attentive and gallant to the queen. When they had taken some cordial Cachelin announced: "The table will be cleared for us. If it is not raining we can go out on the balcony for a while." He wished to show the view, although it was night. He threw open the glass door. A moist breeze entered. It was as warm outside as in the month of April, and every one went up the step which separated the dining-room from the broad balcony. Nothing could be seen but an indistinct light hovering over the great town, like the halos which are placed around the brows of saints. From place to place the light seemed to be a little brighter, and Cachelin began to explain: "You see, that is Eden shining over there. That long line shows the boulevards. How clearly they can be distinguished! In the daytime the view from here is splendid. No matter how far you travel, you will never see anything more beautiful."

Lesable was leaning against the iron railings beside Cora, who was looking out into space, silent, absorbed, suddenly seized by one of those sad languors which at times benumb the soul. Mademoiselle Charlotte returned to the room, fearing the dampness. Cachelin continued to talk, stretching out his arm in order to indicate the directions in

which could be found the Invalides, the Trocadero, the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile.

Lesable murmured to Cora: "And you, Mademoiselle Cora, do you like to look at Paris from up here?"

She started as if she had been just waked up and answered: "Oh, yes, especially at night; I think of what is happening out there in front of us, how many happy and unhappy souls there are in all those houses! If we could only see everything, how much we should learn!"

He had drawn closer so that their shoulders were touching and he said: "It must be wonderful on a moonlight evening!"

She murmured: "Yes, indeed. It looks like an engraving by Gustave Doré. How delightful it would be to take a walk on the roofs!"

Then he questioned her about her tastes, her dreams, her pleasures. She answered, without embarrassment, like a quiet, sensible girl who is not too deep. He found her to be full of common sense, and he thought that it would be really delightful to be able to pass his arm round this round, firm waist and to press many short kisses, just as one takes short sips of excellent brandy, on this fresh cheek, near the tip of the ear, on which was reflected the light from a street lamp. He felt himself attracted, moved by this sensation of a woman near him, by this thirst for ripe, pure flesh and by the delicate seductiveness of the young girl. It seemed to him as if he could stand there hours, nights, weeks, forever, leaning near her, feeling her near him, penetrated by the charm of her contact. And something like a poetic sentiment stirred his heart, facing the

great Paris stretched out in front of him, brilliant with lights, living its nocturnal life of pleasure and revelry. It seemed to him as if he were commanding the enormous city, hovering above her; and he felt that it would be delightful every evening to lean on this balcony, near a woman, to love her, to kiss her lips and to embrace her above the vast city, above all the loves which it enclosed, vulgar satisfaction, all common desires; to feel one's self near the stars.

There are evenings when the least excited souls begin to dream, as if they were growing wings. Perhaps he was a little tipsy.

Cachelin left in order to look for his pipe, and he returned, lighting it. He said: "I know that you do not smoke; that is why I do not offer you any cigarettes. There is nothing better than to smoke one here. If I were on a lower floor I don't believe that I could exist. We could live there if we wished, for the house belongs to my sister, just as do the two neighboring ones, the one to the right and the one to the left. That gives her a pretty good income. These houses were not expensive when she bought them."

Then, turning round toward the room, he cried: How much did you pay for these rooms, Charlotte?"

The shrill voice of the old maid could be heard. Lesable was able to distinguish only fragments of the conversation: ". . . in eighteen hundred and sixty-three . . . thirty-five francs . . . built later . . . the three houses . . . a banker . . . sold again for at least five hundred thousand francs. . . ."

She talked about her fortune with the same willingness that an old soldier speaks of his campaigns. She enumerated her purchases, the propositions which had been made to her since, the highest values, etc.

Lesable became quite interested, turned round, and now leaned with his back to the railing of the balcony. But as he continued only to catch snatches of the explanation, he suddenly left his young neighbor and returned to the room in order better to hear. He sat down beside Mademoiselle Charlotte and talked to her at length about the probable increase in rent and of what revenue might be derived from the money if well invested in stocks or real estate.

He left toward midnight, promising to return.

A month later there was no other topic of conversation in the ministry except of the approaching marriage of Jacques-Léopold Lesable with Mademoiselle Céleste-Coralie Cachelin.

PART III

The young couple settled down on the same floor with Cachelin and Mademoiselle Charlotte, in an apartment exactly similar to theirs, from which the tenant was ousted.

One matter, however, worried Lesable: The aunt had not been willing to bequeath her property to Cora by any binding act. Nevertheless she had consented to swear "before God" that her will was made and deposited with Maitre Belhomme, her notary. Besides this, she had also promised that her

whole fortune would be left to her niece, on one condition. Questioned closely as to this condition, she refused to explain, but she had also sworn with a kindly little smile that it was easy to fulfill.

Lesable thought that he ought to take exception to these explanations and to this stubbornness of the devoted old woman, but as the young woman pleased him immensely his desire triumphed over his hesitation, and he succumbed to the persistent efforts of Cachelin.

Now he was happy, although always tormented by one doubt, and he loved his wife, who had in no way belied his expectations. His life continued quiet and monotonous. In a few weeks he had become accustomed to his new position as a married man, and continued to show himself the accomplished clerk that he had always been.

The year rolled by. New Year's Day returned. To his great surprise he did not receive the promotion he expected.

Maze and Pitolet were the only ones to receive advancement, and Boissel confidentially declared to Cachelin that he would thrash his two colleagues some evening when they were leaving the principal entrance, before everybody. He did nothing.

For a whole week Lesable did not sleep as a result of worrying over the fact that he had not been promoted, notwithstanding all his zeal. Nevertheless he was working like a dog; he was replacing for an indefinite time the assistant manager, M. Rabot, who had been ill for the past nine months in the Val-de-Grace Hospital; he arrived every morning at half-past eight and he would not leave until half-past six. What more could they ask for? If they

did not appreciate such work and efforts, why, he could do as the others did, that's all! Each one according to his deserts. How could M. Torchebeuf, who treated him like a son, have sacrificed him? He wished an explanation. He would go to the chief and have a talk with him.

Therefore one Monday morning, before his comrades arrived, he knocked at the door of this potentate. A sharp voice cried: "Come in!" He entered.

M. Torchebeuf was writing at a large table covered with papers; he was very small, with an enormous head, which seemed almost to be resting on the blotter. When he saw his favorite clerk, he said:

"Good morning, Lesable. How are you?"

The young man answered: "Good morning, dear master; very well, and how are you?"

The chief stopped writing and turned his chair round. His narrow, frail, thin body, enclosed in a black frock-coat of severe cut, seemed quite lost in the big leather chair cushion. An immense, gaudy rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, ten times too large for the person who was wearing it, stood out like a red ball on the narrow chest, weighed down by an enormous head, as if the whole being had been developed in the form of a dome, like a mushroom.

The jaw was pointed, the cheeks were hollow, the eyes bulging and the forehead unusually high, with white hair brushed back. "Sit down, my friend," said M. Torchebeuf, "and tell me what brings you here."

Toward all the other employés he showed a military abruptness, considering himself as a captain on his boat, for the ministry represented for him an

enormous vessel, the flagship of all the French squadrons.

Lesable, a little moved, a little pale, stammered: "Dear master, I have come to ask you whether I have not been faithful in everything?"

"Why, of course, my dear fellow. Why do you ask me such a question?"

"Why, I was a little surprised at not receiving any promotion this year as in previous years. Allow me to explain myself, dear master, and to beg your pardon for my audacity. I know that I have obtained exceptional favors and unexpected advantages from you. I know that promotion is usually given only every two or three years, but allow me to point out that I do about four times the work of an ordinary clerk, and that I work at least twice as long. If the results of my work are weighed against the remuneration which I receive, the former would certainly be found to be far above the latter!"

He had carefully prepared his speech and considered it excellent.

M. Torchebeuf, surprised, was searching for an answer. At last he said, a little coldly: "Although, as a rule, a discussion of such matters between manager and clerk is not admissible, I am willing, for once, to answer you, in view of your very meritorious services.

"I proposed you for promotion just as I have proposed it in preceding years. But the director set your name aside, in view of the fact of your marriage, which assures to you a fine future, more than comfort, a fortune which none of your colleagues can ever expect to obtain. Taken all in all, is it not fair that each one should have his share? You will

become rich, very rich. Three hundred francs a year will not be much for you, while this little increase would mean much to the others. There, my friend, is the reason why you were left behind this year."

Lesable, confused and irritated, withdrew.

That evening at dinner he was very disagreeable to his wife. She was usually gay and even-tempered, but willful; when she really wished a thing she never gave in. She no longer had for him the sensual charm of the first few days, and, although she could always awaken desire in him, for she was pretty and fresh-looking, he at times felt that disillusion, so close to disgust, that life in common produces in two beings. The thousand trivial or grotesque details of existence, careless morning dressing, slovenly wrappers, faded kimonas—for they were not rich—and all the necessary details of housekeeping when seen from too close, robbed marriage, took away the illusion of marriage, faded that flower of poetry, which, seen from a distance, leads lovers on. Aunt Charlotte made his home most disagreeable, for she no longer left the house; she interfered in everything, wished to boss everything, made remarks about everything, and, as every one was dreadfully afraid of annoying her, she was tolerated with resignation, but also with a growing and secret exasperation. She would walk across the apartment with the dragging step of an old woman and would say in her shrill voice: "You ought to do this, you ought to do that!"

When the couple were alone, Lesable, growing nervous, would exclaim: "Your aunt is becoming unbearable! I'll have nothing more to do with her.

Do you hear? I'll have nothing more to do with her." And Cora would quietly answer: "What can I do?"

Then he would fly into a rage and say: "It's terrible to have such a family!"

She would answer calmly: "Yes, the family is odious, the family is terrible, but the inheritance is good, isn't it? Don't be a fool! It's as much to your interest as mine to humor Aunt Charlotte."

And he would keep still, not knowing what to answer.

But one morning she did not feel well enough to get up. As she never had been sick, Cachelin, worried, knocked at his son-in-law's door: "Run over to Dr. Barbette. Please also tell the chief that I shall be unable to go to the office to-day, in view of present circumstances."

Lesable was in torture all day, unable to work, write or attend to business. M. Torchebeuf, surprised, asked him: "You seem to be preoccupied to-day, Monsieur Lesable?" And Lesable nervously answered: "I am very tired, dear master. I spent the whole night by our aunt's bedside; she is in a very serious condition."

The manager continued coldly: "As long as Monsieur Cachelin was there, that was sufficient. I do not wish to see my office upset on account of my clerks' personal affairs."

Lesable had placed his watch in front of him on the table, and was awaiting five o'clock with a feverish impatience. As soon as the clock struck in the main hall he made his escape, for the first time leaving the office at the regulation hour. He was so impatient that he even took a cab to return home. He

ran up the stairs. As the servant opened the door he stammered: "How is she?"

"The doctor says that she is pretty low."

His heart fluttered and he stood still from emotion, asking: "Really?"

Suppose she were to die!

He did not dare enter the sick room, and he sent for Cachelin, who was nursing her. His father-in-law immediately appeared. He was wearing his dressing-gown and a little skull-cap and whispered as he opened the door gently: "She is very low, very low indeed. She has been unconscious for the last four hours. The priest was here during the afternoon."

Lesable began to feel a weakness in his legs and he sat down, asking: "Where is my wife?"

"She is with her aunt."

"Exactly what does the doctor say?"

"He says that it's a stroke. She may recover, but she may also die during the night."

"Do you need me? If you do not, I prefer not to go in. It would be very painful for me to see her in this state."

"No, you need not go in. If there is anything new I will call you immediately."

Lesable returned to his apartment. Everything seemed changed, larger, clearer. But as he could not keep still, he went out on the balcony. It was at the end of July, and the enormous sun, just as it was ready to disappear behind the two towers of the Trocadéro, was pouring out a torrent of fire from the broad, expansive roofs. A broad patch of red at his feet took on, farther up, tints of pale gold, then yellow, then of a delicate green, flecked with

light, and then finally took on a pure, fresh hue overhead.

Swallows darted like hardy, visible arrows over the crimson sky, and over the infinite crowd of houses and the distant country floated a rose-colored mist into which rose the church steeples and all the tall monuments. The Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile appeared enormous and black, and the dome of the Invalides seemed like another sun which had fallen from celestial heights on the back of another edifice. Lesable was holding the iron railing in his hand and drinking in the air as if it were wine. He was filled with a desire to jump, to cry out aloud and wave his arms; he felt full of a profound and triumphant joy. Life appeared to him in a radiant hue. A future full of happiness! What should he do? And he began to dream.

A slight noise behind him made him start. It was his wife. Her eyes were red and swollen; she looked tired. She held up her forehead for him to kiss and said: "We will eat with father, in order to be near her. While we are eating the servant will stay with her."

He followed her into the neighboring apartment. Cachelin was already seated at the table, awaiting his daughter and his son-in-law. A cold chicken, some potato salad and strawberry jam were on the sideboard; the soup was steaming in the plates. All sat down. Cachelin declared: "I don't care to go through many days like this. It hasn't been very enjoyable." He said this in an indifferent tone and with a self-satisfied look. He began to devour his food with great appetite, finding the chicken excellent and the potato salad delicious.

But Lesable was worried and ate little; he barely listened to the conversation, as if expecting a sound to come from the neighboring room, which remained perfectly still, however. Cora did not eat, either; she was moved, tearful and kept wiping her eyes from time to time with the corner of her napkin.

"What did the chief say?" Cachelin asked.

Lesable answered him in the most detailed fashion, taking great care not to omit the slightest detail; but this did not satisfy his father-in-law, who continued to ply him with questions, as if he had been away from the ministry for a year and wanted to know the changes that had taken place.

"It must have created quite a sensation when they were told she was ill?" And he began to dream of his sensational re-entry, after her death, and of the questions which would be showered upon him by his colleagues. He said, however, as if to silence a secret remorse: "It isn't that I wish the poor woman any harm! God knows that I should like to have her among us forever, but it will create a sensation, anyhow. Old Man Savon will surely forget the Commune this time—for a few moments, anyway."

They were just beginning to eat the strawberries when the door of the sick chamber was opened. The three diners were instantly upon their feet and remained startled for a few seconds. The little servant appeared with the same impassible and stupid air. She said quietly: "She's stopped breathing."

Cachelin threw his napkin on the table and rushed into the other room like a madman; Cora followed him, her heart beating fast; but Lesable kept near the door and stared at the bed, the white sheets of

which could hardly be seen in the dim light. He saw his father-in-law leaning over the bed, motionless, and suddenly he heard his voice, which seemed to come from a distance, from a long way off, one of those voices that one hears in dreams, which tell the most astounding things. It said: "It is all over!" He saw his wife fall upon her knees, press her head against the sheets and sob. Then he decided to enter the room, and when Cachelin rose he saw, upon the white pillow-case, Aunt Charlotte's face—her eyes were closed and she looked rigid and pale, like a wax figure.

He inquired anxiously: "Is it all over?"

Cachelin, who was also gazing at his sister, turned toward him and they looked into each other's eyes. He answered "yes," at the same time trying to make his face take on an expression of sorrow, but the two men had penetrated each other's minds at a glance, and without knowing why, they shook hands instinctively, as if to thank each other for mutual services rendered.

Then they lost no time in busying themselves with the many things which have to be done in a house where a death has just occurred.

Lesable went to get the doctor and undertook also to do the other most urgent errands.

He put on his hat and rushed down the stairs, being in a hurry to get to the street and breathe the fresh air, to think freely and enjoy his good luck.

After he had done his various errands he took a stroll on the boulevards, for he was eager now to see many people, to mingle with them and enjoy the gay evening life. He almost wanted to shout at the top of his lungs, so that every one could hear

him: "I am worth fifty thousand francs a year!" and he walked along, with his hands in his pocket, examining all the show-windows, full of jewels and luxurious furniture, joyfully thinking: "I shall now be able to afford all this."

Suddenly he stopped before a store that made a specialty of the various things used for mourning attire. A vague fear upset him: "What if she were not dead, after all? Suppose they had been mistaken?"

He hurried home, spurred on by the desire to make sure that his fears were not true.

As soòn as he arrived he inquired, "Did the doctor come?"

Cachelin answered: "Yes. He has confirmed the decease and said he would file the certificate himself."

They then went into the death chamber. Cora was still weeping, seated in an armchair. She wept softly, almost noiselessly, and with less grief now, but with that facility for tears which is common to all women.

As soon as they were all three alone in the room Cachelin said in low tones: "Now that the servant has retired, let us look to see whether there is anything hidden in the furniture."

The two men set to work. They emptied the drawers, searched all the pockets and unfolded the slightest bit of paper that came into their hands. At midnight they had not yet found anything interesting. Cora had fallen asleep and was snoring in a regular fashion. César inquired: "Shall we remain here until daybreak?" Lesable was perplexed, though he finally decided it would be the proper

thing to do. The father-in-law then suggested: "Let us bring in a few armchairs," and they made themselves comfortable in two easy-chairs which belonged to the young couple's apartment.

An hour later the three relatives were sleeping and snoring irregularly before the corpse, icy in its eternal immobility.

They woke up next morning when the servant entered the room. Cachelin readily confessed as he rubbed his eyes: "I've been dozing for the last half hour or so."

But Lesable, who immediately regained his composure, said: "Yes, I noticed it. I didn't fall asleep at all; I merely shut my eyes to rest them."

Cora went to her room.

Then Lesable inquired with an air of apparent indifference: "When do you wish to go to the notary's to find out about the will?"

"Why, this morning, if you wish."

"Is it necessary for Cora to accompany us?"

"It would be better, for, after all, she's the heir."

And Lesable went out with his usual quick step.

The offices of Maître Belhomme had just opened when Cachelin, Lesable and his wife presented themselves in deep mourning, with very sad faces.

The notary had them ushered in immediately and offered them seats. Cachelin was the first to speak: "Monsieur, you remember me? I am Mademoiselle Charlotte Cachelin's brother. These are my daughter and my son-in-law. My poor sister died yesterday; we'll bury her to-morrow. As you are the depositary of her will, we come to ask you whether she has not formulated some request relative to her

burial, or if you have not some communication to make to us."

The notary opened a drawer, took out an envelope, from which he drew a paper, and said: "Here, monsieur, is a duplicate of the will, with the contents of which I shall make you acquainted immediately. The other copy must remain in my hands." And he read:

"I, the undersigned, Victorine-Charlotte Cachelin, here express my last wishes:

"I bequeath my entire fortune, of about a million one hundred and twenty thousand francs, to the children who will be born of the marriage of my niece, Céleste-Coralie Cachelin, the parents to enjoy the interest of the money until the eldest of their descendants is of age.

"The provisions which follow determine the amount belonging to each child and the amount that will belong to the parents during their lifetime.

"In the event of my death before my niece has an heir my entire fortune will remain in the hands of my notary for three years, when my wishes above expressed are to be carried out, if a child is born during that time.

"But should Coralie not obtain from Heaven a descendant during the three years following my death my fortune is to be distributed, by the hands of my notary, among the poor and among the benevolent institutions contained in the following list."

There followed an interminable series of names of institutions, of figures, of commands and directions.

Maitre Belhomme then politely handed the paper over to Cachelin, who stood dumfounded.

The notary thought he ought to add a few words of explanation: "Mademoiselle Cachelin," said he, "when she did me the honor to speak to me for the first time of her project of making this will, expressed to me her very great desire to see an heir of her race. She replied to all my reasoning by simply stating her wish all the more firmly; this wish was very strong, inasmuch as it was based on a religious conviction of hers that a sterile union was the sign of a divine malediction. I was not able to modify her intentions in the least. Rest assured that I regret it exceedingly." Then he added, smiling as he glanced at Coralie: "I have no doubt that the desire of the defunct will soon be realized."

And the three relatives went away, much too startled to think at all for the present.

They wended their way homeward, side by side, without saying a word, ashamed and furious, as if they had mutually robbed each other. Cora's grief disappeared now, as if her aunt's ingratitude had suddenly dried up her tears. Lesable, whose pale lips were drawn with vexation at this disappointment, said to his father-in-law: "Let me see the paper myself." Cachelin handed it to him, and the young man began to read it. He had stopped walking now and remained on the sidewalk, indifferent to the jostling of the crowd, lost in the perusal of the will, every word of which he studied with a piercing and practical eye. The other two waited silently for him, a few steps away.

Then he said as he handed the paper back: "There

is nothing to be done. She has fooled us all beautifully."

Cachelin, irritated at this blasting of his hopes, answered: "It was your business to have a child, *sacré bleu!* You knew that she wanted it long ago."

Lesable shrugged his shoulders without answering.

When they reached the house they found it full of people, the people whose business it is to care for the dead. Lesable retired to his room, as if he were through with it all, and César stormed at every one, shouting that he wanted to be let alone, asking them to get through with it all as soon as possible, as he thought they were a long time ridding him of this corpse.

Cora, shut up in her room, did not make the slightest noise. But Cachelin, an hour later, went to rap at his son-in-law's door: "I wish to submit," said he, "a few reflections, for we must come to an understanding about this. My opinion is that we should have an appropriate funeral, so as not to give them any hint at the ministry. We'll settle about the expenses later on. Besides, nothing is lost. You haven't been married long, and it would be a sad thing if you could not have children. Let us see about the most important matters now. Will you go to the ministry? I will address a few envelopes for the invitations to the ceremony."

Lesable admitted that his father-in-law was right, and they set to work at opposite ends of the table and began to fill the blank spaces on the black-bordered cards.

Then they had breakfast. Cora came into the room, perfectly indifferent to everything about her,

and ate heartily, as she had eaten nothing the evening before.

As soon as she had finished she returned to her room. Lesable left the house to go to the ministry, while Cachelin installed himself on the balcony, in order to enjoy a pipe. The hot sun of a summer day fell perpendicularly upon the multitude of roofs and windows blazed as with fire as they reflected the dazzling rays which blinded one's eyes.

And Cachelin, in his shirt-sleeves, looked upon the green hillsides, far away behind the city and its dusty suburbs. He thought of how the Seine flowed there, broad, calm and fresh, at the foot of the hills which had trees on their slopes, and how much better it would be to lie upon this verdure and gaze into the river than to be sitting on this burning terrace. He was ill at ease, oppressed by an ever-present tormenting thought: the grievous sensation of their disaster, of this unexpected misfortune, all the more bitter and brutal that the hope had been so vivid and tardy in its so ardently desired realization, and he said aloud, as people do in a very perturbed state of mind, "The mean jade!"

Behind him in the bed chamber he heard the undertakers moving about and the continuous noise of the hammer driving the nails into the coffin. He had not seen his sister since his visit to the notary.

Lesable furtively entered the ministry and slipped into his office. He found a piece of paper in his desk containing these words: "The chief wishes to see you." His first movement was one of impatience, of revolt against this despotism which was to place its yoke on him again. Then he was brusquely seized by a desire to get ahead. He would

be chief, too, and before long; he would even rise higher!

Without taking off his frock-coat, he went at once to M. Torchebeuf. He presented himself with one of those downcast countenances appropriate to sad occasions and also an expression of real dejection caused by violent contradictory emotions.

The enormous head of the chief was bent over a mass of papers. He raised it and asked abruptly: "I needed you all morning. Why didn't you come?" Lesable answered: "Dear master, we have had the misfortune to lose my aunt, Mademoiselle Cachelin, and I was about to ask you to attend the funeral, which will take place to-morrow."

M. Torchebeuf's face was serene again. He answered with a certain shade of consideration: "That's different, my friend. I thank you and give you the day off, for you must have your hands full."

But Lesable wished to show his zeal, and answered quickly: "I thank you, dear master, but as everything has already been done, I expect to remain here until the regular hour for closing."

And he returned to his desk.

The news soon spread, and his fellows came from all the departments to tender him their congratulations rather than their condolences and also to see how he bore it. He endured their speeches and glances with a resigned air worthy of an actor and a tact that surprised them all. "He certainly stands it well," said some. And others added: "He must be jolly well pleased, when all is said and done."

Maze, with his more audacious and careless demeanor of the man of the world, asked him: "Do you know exactly how much she had?"

Lesabe answered with a perfect imitation of disinterestedness: "No, not precisely. The will says twelve hundred thousand francs. I know that much, because the notary was obliged to give us a few instructions in regard to her burial."

It was the consensus of opinion that Lesable would not remain at the ministry. With a yearly income of sixty thousand francs one does not remain as quill-driver. One is somebody and can become anything one wishes to be. Some thought that he had his eye on the cabinet; others that he hoped to become a deputy some day. The chief was expecting to receive his resignation, which he would hand in to the ministry.

The entire staff of the office came to the obsequies, which were deemed very meager. But it was said: "It was Mademoiselle Cachelin who desired them so. It was in the will."

The next day Cachelin went back to his office, and Lesable, after a week's illness, also returned to his occupation, somewhat pale, but as assiduous and zealous as formerly. One would never have thought that any grave incident had just taken place in their lives. It was merely noticed that they ostentatiously smoked big cigars, spoke of government bonds, railroad dividends, stocks in general, like men who have much money in their possession, and it was learned that they had rented a cottage in one of the suburbs of Paris for the rest of the summer.

Every one thought: "They are just as stingy as the old lady; it's in the family; birds of a feather flock together; but, anyway, it's not right for them to retain their clerkships when they have so much money."

After a while the whole affair dropped out of the others' minds. They were rated and classed accordingly.

PART IV

Even during the funeral of Aunt Charlotte, Lesable could not help thinking of the million, and his rage being all the more violent because he was obliged to keep it secret, he hated all the world on account of his deplorable misfortune.

He secretly asked himself: "Why didn't I have children in the two years we have been married?" And the fear that his union would be sterile made his heart beat.

Then, just like the boy who sees the glittering prize at the top of the pole and promises himself to reach it by sheer strength and will-power, and to summon up the necessary vigor and tenacity, Lesable desperately resolved to become a father. So many others are, why should not he?

But when he got home again he felt indisposed and was obliged to take to his bed.

The doctor prescribed absolute rest, to be followed later by a certain course of treatment. Brain fever was feared.

Eight days later he was up and about, however, and able to go back to his work.

As he was not satisfied with the slowness of his improvement, he conceived the idea of finishing the summer in one of the suburbs of Paris. And soon he felt persuaded that the fresh air would have the most beneficial influence on his temperament. In

his case the country air would produce the most marvelous results. He consoled himself with the certainty of his future success, and he would repeat to his father-in-law with an air of vague insinuation: "When we are in the country everything will be all right."

The word "country" alone seemed to him to bear with it a mysterious meaning.

So they rented a villa at Bezons and all three lived there together. The two men walked to the station at Colombes every morning and did the same every evening.

Cora, delighted with this life along the banks of the sweet little river, would idle away her time in picking flowers and gathering enormous bouquets of delicate, trembling ferns.

Every evening they would take a stroll as far as the tollgate of the Morne and enjoy a bottle of beer at the restaurant of The Willows. The river, retarded in its course by the long file of stakes, poured between them and leaped, bubbled and foamed over a space three hundred feet wide; the roaring of the falls made the soil tremble, while a fine mist of vapor floated in the air, arising from the cascade like a light smoke, throwing on the surroundings a delightful odor of spray and a savor of wet earth. As night fell a great light in the distance below and ahead of them indicated Paris, which made Cachelin say every evening: "What a city, after all!" From time to time a train passing on the iron bridge which crossed the end of the island rattled by like a peal of thunder and disappeared quickly, either to the right or to the left, bound for Paris or the sea.

They returned home slowly, watching the moon

rise, sometimes seating themselves on the bank to see its soft yellow light fall upon the river, whose rippling waters looked very much like flame-colored moiré silk. The frogs uttered their short metallic cries. The calls of the night birds rang out on the air, and sometimes a large, mute shadow glided on the river, troubling its tranquil and luminous course. It was a boat occupied by freebooters who, throwing in their net suddenly, drew it back noiselessly into their boat, dragging in its vast and somber mesh a shoal of shining and quivering gudgeons, like a treasure drawn from the bottom of the sea, a living treasure of silver fish.

Cora, deeply moved, leaned tenderly on the arm of her husband, whose intentions she had guessed, although he said nothing to her about them. It was for the pair like a new betrothal, a second honeymoon. Sometimes he kissed her furtively on the neck behind the ear, just where the downy hair begins to curl.

Cachelin, appeased by the new hope which he felt around him, lived happily, drank much and ate more, feeling quite poetical at twilight—that foolish tenderness which comes to the dullest on seeing certain landscapes, a shower of light in the branches, a setting sun on the distant slopes, with purple reflections on the river. And he would exclaim: "When I see such sights I have to believe in God. It gets me here"—and he indicated the pit of his stomach—"and I feel uneasy. I feel queer. I feel as if I had been plunged in a sort of bath that makes me want to cry."

Lesable was now getting better, and he was suddenly seized with longings which were a surprise to

him; he experienced a desire to run and frisk about like a colt, to roll in the grass and to shout for joy.

They returned to Paris in the early part of October.

Life was becoming hard for them. They had unkind words for each other at the slightest provocation, and Cachelin, who was beginning to realize the situation, teased them with the sarcastic and coarse epigrams of an old campaigner.

And they were ever pursued by the same thought that tortured them, embittered their mutual hatred, that of the unattainable inheritance. Cora now took a high hand and treated her husband rudely. She acted as if he were a little boy or a man of no consequence. Cachelin would say at the supper-table: "If I had been rich I should have had many children. . . . But when one is poor one must be sensible." And, turning to his daughter, he would add: "You ought to be like myself, but . . ." Then he would cast a meaning glance at his son-in-law and shrug his shoulders in a contemptuous manner.

Lesable made no answer, like a man of great superiority who had been unfortunate enough to marry into a family of boors. At the ministry they all said he was not looking well. The chief clerk even asked him once: "Aren't you sick? You look changed."

He answered: "Not at all, dear master. I may be a little tired. I have worked a great deal these last few weeks, as you may see for yourself."

He expected to receive a certain advancement at the end of the year, and it was with this hope that he had resumed his work with ardor.

He received only a small present, less than any of the rest. His father-in-law got nothing.

Lesable was indignant and went immediately to his superior, and, for the first time, addressed him as "monsieur." "Why should I work, monsieur, like a slave, if I am not to be properly recompensed?"

M. Torchebeuf was annoyed. "I have told you already, Monsieur Lesable, that I did not wish to discuss such subjects with you. Besides, it is not fair for you to envy any favor which may be conferred upon your colleagues when you consider your financial position."

Lesable could not help blurting out: "But I possess nothing, monsieur. My aunt left her fortune to the first child born to us. My father-in-law and I are living on our salaries."

The astonished chief clerk answered: "If you're not rich at present, you will be some day, so it's all the same."

Lesable withdrew, more downcast over the loss of this advancement than over the unattainable million itself.

A few days later, just as Cachelin had installed himself at his desk, the handsome Maze entered the room, a smile upon his lips; then appeared Pitolet with his eyes sparkling; next Boissel, who opened the door and advanced slowly, tittering and exchanging meaning looks with the others. Old Man Savon continued his copying, his clay pipe in the corner of his mouth, seated on his high chair, his two feet stuck in between the lower bars of his chair, schoolboy fashion.

No one spoke. They seemed to be waiting for something, and Cachelin continued to file orders,

saying aloud, according to his custom: "Toulon: mess furnishings for the officers of the *Richelieu*. Lorient: diving apparatus for the *Desaix*. Brest: samples of sails of English manufacture for tests."

Lesable put in an appearance. He now came every morning to collect whatever papers were for him, as his father-in-law no longer even took the pains to send them by the porter.

While he was searching among the documents scattered on the order clerk's desk, Maze looked at him from the corner of his eye and rubbed his hands, and Pitolet, who was rolling a cigarette, was all smiles, like one who is overjoyed at something. "Say, Father Savon, you've learned many things in the course of your lifetime, haven't you?"

The old man, who was afraid that they were about to make game of him and refer to his wife again, made no answer.

The good man raised his head: "You know I don't like to jest about this subject. I was unfortunate in marrying an unworthy woman. When I had proof of her infidelity, I divorced her."

Maze, putting on an indifferent air, asked him very seriously: "You obtained proofs on more than one occasion, didn't you?"

And Old Man Savon replied gravely: "Yes, monsieur."

Pitolet joined in: "Still, you are the father of three or four children, aren't you?"

The poor fellow blushed and stammered: "You are trying to wound me, Monsieur Pitolet, but you will not succeed."

Pitolet said: "It's great to have a child, very

nice and lucky. I wager Lesable would be delighted to have one, just one, like you."

Cachelin had stopped recording. He did not laugh, although Old Man Savon was always a butt for his jokes, which he never failed to hurl at him whenever the subject of his marital woes came up.

Lesable had collected his papers, but knowing well they were attacking him, wished to stay, held back by pride, confused and irritated, above all curious to learn who betrayed his secret. Then he remembered his conversation with the head clerk, and he soon realized that he must show a bold front and much energy, if he did not want to be the laughing-stock of the whole place.

Everybody laughed except Lesable and his father-in-law. And Pitolet, turning toward the order clerk, said: "What's the matter with you, Cachelin? You don't look as if you thought it funny that Old Man Savon had a child."

Lesable began to rummage among his papers again, pretended to read and ignore the conversation, but he was deathly pale.

Boissel repeated in the same hoarse voice: "Concerning the utility of heirs in obtaining inheritances —only two cents!"

Then Maze, who did not approve of this coarse wit and who, deep in his heart, had a grudge against Lesable for having robbed him of his chance of getting the million, asked his more fortunate colleague: "Why, what's the matter, Lesable, you're very pale?"

Lesable looked him square in the face. He hesitated a few moments and tried to find some cutting or witty rejoinder, but failing, merely answered:

"Nothing. I am just wondering where you got all this refined wit."

A peal of laughter rang out. Old Man Savon, who was beginning to understand that he was not the butt this time, looked on with much astonishment, his mouth wide open. Cachelin awaited the outcome, ready to pounce on the nearest one to him.

The handsome Maze let go one of his coat-tails to curl his mustache and said graciously: "I know that you usually succeed in anything you wish. So I'm wrong in mentioning you. Besides, it's all about Old Man Savon's children, not yours, since you have none."

Lesable inquired impatiently: "What business is it of yours?"

At this Maze also raised his voice: "I say, what's the matter with you? Try to be polite or I'll make you so!"

But Lesable was trembling with anger and losing all self-control, replied: "Monsieur Maze, I am neither a coxcomb nor a dandy like yourself. I forbid you ever to speak to me again. I despise you and all your kind." And he looked defiantly at Boissel and Pitolet.

Maze saw suddenly that his true strength would be in remaining calm and ironical, but his vanity was wounded, and he wished to hurt his enemy deeply, so he went on in a patronizing manner, although his eyes sparkled with rage: "My dear Lesable, you're forgetting yourself. I understand your vexation; it's hard to lose a fortune on account of such a simple thing."

He was still going on in that strain when he received full in the chest Father Savon's ink-pot,

which Lesable had hurled at him. A flood of ink covered his face and metamorphosed him into a negro with surprising rapidity. He sprang forth, rolling the whites of his eyes, with his hand raised to strike. But Cachelin got in front of his son-in-law, and gripping big Maze round the waist, dragged him aside, shaking him and showering blows on him, and threw him against the wall. Maze freed himself by a violent effort, opened the door and shouted to the two men: "You'll hear from me!" and disappeared.

Pitolet and Boissel followed. Boissel explained his moderation by saying he was afraid to mix in for fear of killing some one.

As soon as he was in his office Maze tried to wash off the stains, but without success; he was covered with a violet ink, said to be indelible. He stood before his mirror, furious and disconsolate, rubbing his face with all his might. He merely obtained a richer color, mingled with red, as he had rubbed his face till it bled.

Boissel and Pitolet were giving him advice. One suggested that he use olive-oil to wash away the ink, the other was sure ammonia was best. The office boy was rushed off to an apothecary, who sent back a yellow liquid and a pumice-stone, all of which produced no better results.

Maze, disheartened, sank into a chair and declared: "The only thing to do now is to settle the question of honor. Will you be my seconds and demand of Monsieur Lesabe a sufficient apology or the reparation of arms?"

They consented readily and began to discuss the necessary steps to be taken. They were totally igno-

rant about such affairs, but unwilling to betray their ignorance and eager to appear correct, their opinions were weak and contradictory. It was finally agreed that a captain of the navy who was then at the ministry should be consulted. But he knew less. After a few minutes' thinking, he advised them to go and see Lesable and ask to be put in touch with two of his friends.

As they were on their way to the bureau of their colleague, Boissel suddenly stopped. "Ought we not to have our gloves on?" he asked.

Pitolet hesitated an instant. "Perhaps," replied he seriously. "But then we would have to go out to get the gloves, and the chief would stand for no nonsense."

They sent the office boy to bring an assortment from the nearest glove store.

To decide upon the color took time. Boissel preferred black; Pitolet thought that shade out of place under the circumstances. Finally they chose violet.

Seeing the pair enter gloved and solemn, Lesable raised his head and brusquely demanded: "What do you want?"

Pitolet answered: "Sir, we are charged by our friend, Monsieur Maze, to ask of you an apology or a reparation by arms for the assault you made upon him."

But Lesable, still exasperated, cried: "What! he insults me, and then he challenges me into the bargain? Tell him that I despise him, whatever he may do or say."

Boissel advanced tragically and said: "You will oblige us to discuss the matter in the papers, which would be very unpleasant for you."

Pitolet cunningly added: "And which will hurt your reputation and spoil your chances of promotion."

Lesable was taken aback. What could he do? He thought of gaining time only. "Gentlemen, you will have my answer within ten minutes. Will you wait for it at Monsieur Pitolet's office?"

As soon as he was alone he looked about him, as if to obtain some advice or protection.

A duel! He was about to fight a duel!

He remained startled, frightened, like a peaceful man who had never considered the possibility of such an event, who was not prepared, whose courage was unequal to such a formidable event. He tried to get up, but fell back on his chair, with beating heart. His strength and anger had both suddenly disappeared. But the thought of the opinion of the office, the gossip the whole affair would give rise to, revived his failing pride, and, at a loss as to what to decide, he went to his chief for advice.

Monsieur Torchebeuf was astonished and perplexed. He saw no need of a duel. Besides, all this was going to upset the business of the office. He answered: "I have nothing to say. It is a question of honor which does not concern me. Do you wish me to give you a note to Commandant Bouc? He is very competent in such matters, and he'll be able to guide you."

Lesable accepted the offer and went to the commandant, who even consented to be second. He took an under chief for another.

Boissel and Pitolet were waiting for them with their gloves on. They had borrowed two chairs from the next office in order to have four.

They saluted gravely and sat down. Pitolet explained the situation. The commandant, after having listened to it all, said: "It's serious, but not irreparable; it all depends upon the intention." He was a sly old sailor, who was enjoying himself.

A lengthy discussion ensued, and four different letters were drawn up, excuses to be tendered by both parties. If Monsieur Maze would acknowledge that he had at the beginning no offensive intent Monsieur Lesable, on his part, would acknowledge he was to blame for throwing the ink-well at his opponent and would ask pardon for his hasty violence.

And the four proxies returned to their clients.

Maze, seated at his table, was agitated by the dread of the possible duel, although expecting to see his adversary retreat, and looked at his cheeks in the little pocket mirror which all office employés carry with them.

He read the letters which were submitted to him and declared, visibly satisfied: "It seems honorable; I am ready to sign."

Lesable had also accepted, without demur, the compromise of his seconds, saying: "If that is your advice, I can but acquiesce."

The four plenipotentiaries met again. Letters were exchanged; they saluted gravely and separated.

An extraordinary agitation prevailed throughout the office. Every one was eager for news.

When it was learned that the matter was settled every one felt disappointed. Some one said: "That does not give Lesable a child." And the saying spread. One of the employés made a song of it.

But, just when everything seemed adjusted, a

difficulty arose, suggested by Boissel: "What should be the attitude of the adversaries when they met face to face? Should they speak or should they feign to be strangers?" It was decided that they should meet, as if by chance, in the office of Monsieur Torchebeuf and exchange before him a few words of politeness.

This ceremony was quickly gone through, and Maze, having sent for a cab, went home to try and clean his skin.

Lesable and Cachelin returned home together, irritated with one another as if what had happened was due to the other's fault. As soon as he got into the house Lesable flung his hat down roughly and shouted to his wife:

"I've had enough of this now. I have to fight a duel for you now!"

She looked at him, astonished and already angry.

"A duel! Why?"

"Because Maze insulted me because of you."

She drew nearer to him. "Because of me! How?"

He sat down furiously and answered: "He insulted me—that's enough."

But she wanted to know. "I insist upon you telling me what he said about me."

Lesable blushed, then stammered: "He said—he said—— It's about our childless marriage."

She gave a start. "Oh, you had better talk! It cost me dear to marry a cipher like you. And what did you answer the wretch?"

This answer scared Lesable, and he answered: "I boxed his ears."

She gave him a look of surprise. "And what did he do?"

"He sent me his seconds."

She was becoming interested, attracted like all women by the danger of the situation, and she asked in a gentler tone, suddenly feeling a certain degree of regret for the man who was about to risk his life for her: "When do you fight?"

He replied calmly: "We don't fight; it has been settled by the seconds. Maze apologized to me."

She stared at him very contemptuously. "Oh, I have been insulted, and you let it go without fighting! All you needed to cap the whole was to be a coward!"

He rebelled. "I order you to keep still. I know better than you about affairs of honor. Besides, here is Maze's letter. Here it is; read it."

She took the paper, read it, guessed everything and sneered: "So you wrote a letter, too. Oh, how cowardly men are! I, your wife, have been insulted and you are perfectly satisfied with that!"

She had suddenly taken on the very air of Cachelin, with all his trooper's gestures and intonations.

There she stood before him, her hands on her hips, tall, strong, full of vigor, rounded breast, flushed face, her voice vibrating deeply, the blood coloring her fresh young cheeks—looking at this pale little man before her, somewhat bald, clean-shaven, with the short whiskers of a lawyer. She felt like choking, like smothering him.

She repeated: "You're good for nothing. You even allow any one and every one to get ahead of you at the office."

The door opened. Cachelin came in, attracted by

the noise of their voices, and asked: "What is the matter?"

She turned round. "I'm just telling that clown a few things."

And Lesable, on raising his eyes, noticed their close resemblance. It seemed to him that a veil had been cast away and that they now appeared to him in their true light, such as they really were, common and coarse. It seemed to him that all hope was lost and that he was condemned to live with those two forever.

Cachelin declared: "If only you could divorce him. It is a pity to have married such a fool!"

Lesable sprang to his feet, trembling with rage which burst forth at that word. He walked up to his father-in-law, spluttering: "Get out of here! Do you hear? You're in my house. Clear out!" And he seized a botle of sedative water, which he brandished like a club.

Cachelin, intimidated, went out of the room backward, murmuring: "What has struck him now?"

But Lesable's anger did not diminish; this was too much for him. He turned round to his wife, who looked at him, rather surprised at his violence, and he cried, after putting back the bottle on the dresser: "As for you—as for you——" But, as he found nothing to say, he stood before her, his face distorted, his voice trembling.

She began to laugh.

This laughter, which was nothing short of an insult to him, crazed him, and he sprang at her, catching her by the neck with his left hand and slapping her furiously with the right. She staggered backward, dazed and almost choking. She struck the

bed, upon which she fell at full length. He held her tight and continued the beating. Suddenly he rose, breathless and exhausted, and, ashamed of his brutality, he stammered: "See now! see now!"

But she did not stir, as if he had killed her. She remained on her back near the edge of the bed, her face buried in her hands. He approached her awkwardly, anxious as to what would happen next and what was taking place in her mind. After a few minutes his anguish increased and he murmured: "Cora! speak, Cora!" She did not answer, nor did she move. What was the matter with her? What was she doing? Above all, what was she going to do?

His wrath having disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, he felt contemptible, almost like a criminal. He had beaten his wife, he, the well-bred, impassive gentleman! And in the softening of his feelings, during the reaction, he felt like begging her pardon, throwing himself upon his knees and kissing the cheek he had smitten. He touched lightly one of her hands spread over her face. She seemed to feel nothing. He petted her, just as one pets a dog that has been scolded. She noticed this. He repeated: "Cora, listen; I'm sorry, listen." She was like a corpse. Then he tried to pull her hand away. It gave way easily, and he saw an eye staring at him in an alarmed and troubled manner.

He went on: "Listen, Cora; I was too hasty. Your father drove me to it. A man cannot stand such insults."

She made no answer, as if she did not hear. He was at a loss as to what to say or do. He kissed her behind the ear, and, as he rose, he saw a tear in the

corner of her eye, which trickled down her cheek; her eyelids fluttered nervously and then closed.

He was overcome with deep sorrow, his emotions were aroused; he fell on her and clasped her convulsively; he brushed her other hand away from her lips, and, showering her face with kisses, he besought her: "My poor Cora, forgive me; for Heaven's sake, forgive me!"

She wept noiselessly and without sobbing, as one does from very grief.

He pressed her to him, caressed her, murmuring all the most endearing words he could find, but she remained insensible. She ceased weeping, though. They remained for some time locked in each other's arms.

Night was approaching and filling the room with its shadows, and when it was altogether dark he became bold and solicited his pardon in such a manner as to revive their mutual hopes.

He soon became himself again. She seemed to be more subdued, even moved, spoke more sweetly than before and looked at her husband with eyes that were almost caressing, as though this unexpected chastisement had relaxed her nerves. He said with perfect calmness: "Your father must be lonesome all alone; you ought to go and fetch him. Besides, it is supper-time." She went out.

It was seven o'clock; the servant announced dinner. Then Cachelin appeared, smiling serenely. The dinner was more cordial and the conversation livelier than it had been for a long time, as if some happy event had just taken place.

PART V

But their ever renewed hopes were doomed to disappointment. From month to month their expectations were shattered and Lesable was in despair. What cut him most was the coarseness of Cachelin, who called him, in their troubled family intimacy, "Monsieur Rooster," in remembrance probably of the day when he came near receiving a bottle on the head for having called his son-in-law a fool.

The father and daughter, instinctively leagued together, enraged at seeing this fortune escape them, could not torture him enough.

At the table Cora would say: "We haven't much for dinner. If we were rich it would be otherwise. Well, it isn't my fault."

When Lesable left for his office she would say: "Take your umbrella so as not to come home as dirty as an omnibus wheel. It isn't my fault if you have to keep up your work as a quill-driver."

When she went out herself she never failed to grumble: "If I had married another man I'd have a carriage of my own."

She thought of it every minute, hated her husband for it, hurled insults at him continually and attributed her loss of the money to him alone.

Lesable finally became ill and the couple went to the doctor's.

He found a slight disposition to heart trouble and even to consumption.

"You must take care of yourself, monsieur, very great care. It's due to an anæmic condition, to ex-

haustion, nothing else. Those slight symptoms, if not treated, soon become serious and incurable."

Lesable became white from anguish and asked for a prescription. He was ordered a very complicated *régime*—iron, rare meat, consommé and a sojourn in the country during the summer. Then the doctor gave them advice for the time when he should be in better health. He gave them an insight into the secrets and tricks usually resorted to successfully in cases like theirs.

The consultation cost forty francs.

When they were in the street Cora said, angrily looking toward the future: "Well, I'm well mated!"

He was silent. He was a prey to all sorts of fears, and weighed each word the doctor had said. Had the latter not deceived him? Had he perceived that there was no hope for him? He did not care a fig for the inheritance and the child! His life was in danger!

He thought he heard a whistling sound in his lungs and his heart beat furiously. As they crossed the Tuileries garden he became weak and wanted to sit down. His wife stood up beside him to humiliate him all the more. He breathed heavily, exaggerating the abnormal manner of breathing due to his emotions; he even counted the beats of his pulse.

Cora stamped with impatience and said: "Are you ever going to stop this farce? Are you ready?" He rose as some persecuted victim might and continued his way without saying a word.

When Cachelin learned the result of the consultation his wrath was beyond control. He bawled: "Well, that's too much! We're beautifully fixed

now!" And he looked at his son-in-law as if he were going to devour him.

Lesable did not pay attention to them; he was preoccupied with his health only. They might roar, but what he was worried about was his health, his life.

He had his various prescriptions placed near him at table, and he took his medicine faithfully, amid the smiles of his wife and the loud sneering laughter of his father-in-law. He was constantly looking at his reflection in the mirror, timing the beats of his pulse, and even had a bed set up for himself in a dark room, so as to be away from his wife.

He now felt for his wife a sort of timid hatred, mingled with contempt and disgust. All women at present appeared to him in the light of dangerous beasts, monsters, whose mission was to destroy men; and he no longer thought of Aunt Charlotte's will except as one recalls an accident that might have proved fatal.

Some months passed. Only a year was left before the fatal term.

Cachelin had hung up in the dining-room a huge calendar from which he tore a number each day; and, raging at his helplessness, in despair at feeling that this fortune was slipping out of his hands, furious at the thought that he would have to keep up his drudgery and then retire on two thousand francs a year, he gave vent to his feelings, which were not far from exciting him to the wildest and most violent acts.

He could not see Lesable without wishing to crush, smother and trample upon him. His hatred was beyond measure. Every time his son-in-law

opened the door it seemed to him that a thief was entering the house—a thief who had robbed him of a sacred family inheritance. He hated him worse than a mortal enemy, despising him for his weakness, above all for his cowardice, since he had renounced all upon which their hopes depended, for fear of his health.

Lesable lived as completely apart from his wife as if no tie united them. He never approached or touched her, and avoided her look as much through shame as through fear.

Cachelin asked his daughter every day:

"Well, did your husband make up his mind?"

She answered: "No, father."

Every evening at table the family quarrels became more bitter. Cachelin repeated constantly: "When a man is not a man, it would be better he should die and make way for some one else."

And Cora added: "The fact is that certain people are of no use; they are simply burdens."

Lesable absorbed his prescriptions and made no reply. One day his father-in-law said: "If you do not pick up soon, I know what my daughter will do."

The son-in-law raised his eyes, foreseeing some new outrage. Cachelin went on: "She'll take some one else. And you are might lucky she hasn't done so already. When one has married a titmouse everything is excusable."

Lesable became livid and answered: "Do not let me stand in the way of her following your good advice."

Cora turned her eyes away. And Cachelin remained somewhat confused, for he readily saw that he had gone a little too far.

PART VI

At the office the two men seemed to live on fairly agreeable terms. They had tacitly agreed, no doubt, to keep their discord secret. They addressed each other as "my dear Cachelin," "my dear Lesable," and even pretended to joke together, to live happily and contented with their life in common.

Lesable and Maze were very polite and tactful toward one another, like two men who had almost had a fight. The duel they had escaped established between them very exaggerated polite relations, a certain mutual esteem and perhaps, too, a secret desire for a reconciliation, for fear of some renewal of the affair. People observed them and admired them for their very refined and reserved attitude toward one another.

They bowed to each other in a very dignified manner.

But they did not speak. Neither cared to be the first to do so.

But one day Lesable was in a hurry and involuntarily rushed into some one coming from an opposite direction. It was Maze. The former immediately inquired with anxiety: "Did I hurt you?"

The other answered: "Not at all."

Ever since that they deemed it proper to exchange a few words whenever they met. They now vied with each other in courtesy and eagerness to oblige one another. This gave rise to an intimacy which was only tempered by a certain reserve such as exists between people who have been mistaken in one another, and soon a comradeship was established.

And they would frequently gossip together in the order clerk's office. Lesable had cast aside his haughty airs, and Maze no longer flaunted his social successes. Cachelin joined in their conversation, apparently highly pleased with their renewal of friendship. Sometimes, after the handsome clerk had left the room, he would say to his son-in-law: "That's a fine-looking chap."

One morning, while they were all four in the order clerk's room, Savon, who never left his copying, suddenly rolled off his chair, the rungs of which had doubtless been sawed off by some joker, and the poor fellow fell on the floor uttering cries of affright.

The other three sprang to his assistance. He attributed this mishap to the machinations of the Communists, and Maze insisted upon finding out where he was hurt. Cachelin and he wanted to undress the old man, to dress the wound they said. But he made a desperate resistance, vociferating that he was unhurt.

When the general mirth had settled down Cachelin said: "Say, Maze, why don't you come to dine with us some Sunday, now that we're good friends? We should be pleased. Will you?"

Lesable added his entreaty, but more coldly than his father-in-law: "Do come, we should be so pleased."

Maze hesitated, embarrassed by all the rumors which had been spread about, the remembrance of which made him smile even now.

Cachelin urged him. "Well, then we may expect you?"

"Yes, I accept."

When her father announced, "Monsieur Maze is to dine with us Sunday," Cora was surprised and could only stammer: "Monsieur Maze? Indeed!"

She blushed very deeply, almost unconsciously. She had heard so much about him, of his manners, his successes, because he was reputed to be quite irresistible with the women, that she had long felt a desire to know him.

Cachelin said, rubbing his hands: "You'll see what a fine-looking, stalwart fellow he is. He's not like your husband."

She remained silent, a little confused, as though she might have dreamed of him.

The dinner was very carefully prepared, as much so as the first one for Lesable formerly. Cachelin discussed the dishes, wishing to have everything flawless, and he seemed gayer, reassured by some secret and sure hope, just as if a certain confidence, still undetermined and vague, had filled his heart all of a sudden.

Cachelin spent that Sunday morning in keeping an eye on the preparations for the dinner, while Lesable was working at some urgent affair, whose papers he had brought home the night before. It was the first week of November and the new year was at hand.

At seven o'clock Maze put in an appearance in the best of spirits. He entered quite familiarly and offered Cora a huge bouquet, which he accompanied with a compliment. He spoke with the easy manner of a man of the world. "It seems to me that I know you a little, and that my acquaintance dates back to your young girlhood, for I have heard much about you for many years."

Cachelin, perceiving the flowers, said: "That's quite refined." And the daughter remembered that Lesable had not brought a bouquet on the occasion of his first visit. The handsome clerk laughed heartily as if among old friends and bestowed upon Cora the most delicate compliments which brought the color to her cheeks.

He thought her most desirable. She found him very charming. When he was gone, Cachelin asked: "Well, isn't he fine? What a rascal! They say he's a lady-killer."

Cora was less expansive, but she acknowledged that he was agreeable and not so much of a dandy as she had imagined.

Lesable admitted that he had not judged Maze fairly at first.

Maze returned a few times after that, then his visits became more and more frequent. Everybody liked him. Cora prepared his favorite dishes, and the three men became inseparable. The new friend procured box seats for the family at the different theaters through the press.

They walked home along the crowded streets to the Lesable home. Maze and Cora went ahead, keeping step, swinging with the same rhythm, like two creatures born to walk side by side in life. They spoke together in low tones and laughed softly, and the young woman would often glance back at her father and husband.

Cachelin looked at the pair benevolently and often, without considering he was talking to his son-in-law, declared: "They have fine figures and look well together." Lesable answered quietly: "They're of the same height." He was happy now

that his heart beat less fast, that he was not out of breath every time he ran and that he was stronger in every way; his grudge against his father-in-law, whose coarse jokes had ceased, was also disappearing.

On New Year's Day he was promoted to the chief clerkship. He was so elated over it that he kissed his wife for the first time in six months. She was confused, as if he had done something improper. She looked at Maze, who had come to wish her a happy near year. The latter was also embarrassed, and he looked out the window, like one who did not wish to see.

But Cachelin soon became irritated and ill-humored again and harassed his son-in-law with a renewal of his former jokes. Sometimes he even attacked Maze, as though he held him responsible for the catastrophe which hung over them and the inevitable fate which was rapidly approaching.

March was there and all hope seemed to have vanished, for it would be three years this July since Aunt Charlotte's death.

Spring was early this year. Maze suggested that they all go to the country to pick violets.

They took an early train and stopped at Maisons-Laffitte. A winter breeze was blowing in between the bare twigs, but the green turf was spotted with white and blue flowers, and the fruit trees on the hillside seemed garlanded with roses, their bare branches covered with clusters of bloom.

The Seine ran slow, melancholy and muddy from the last rainfall between its banks, and the whole country around seemed to have arisen from a bath

and exhaled a savor of mild humidity under the warmth of the first days of spring.

They wandered in the park. Cachelin was glum and more downcast than usual as he thought bitterly of their future disaster. Lesable, morose also, was afraid of getting his feet wet, while Maze and Cora were gathering flowers for a bouquet. Cora for the past few days seemed to be suffering, pale and always tired.

She was soon fatigued and requested to return for luncheon. They came upon a little restaurant near an old ruined mill, and the traditional repast of Parisians on an outing was soon served under a green arbor on the wooden table covered with two napkins, right near the river.

They had just had some fish and some roast beef when Cora hurriedly rose from the table and ran toward the river, holding her napkin over her mouth.

Lesable asked anxiously: "What's the matter with her?" Maze was troubled and answered blushingly: "I am sure I don't know—she was all right a little while ago."

Cachelin stood there, startled, holding his fork in his hand with a bit of salad fluttering on the end of it.

He tried to catch sight of his daughter. Bending a little to the side, he saw his daughter leaning against a tree.

And on the way back she took her husband's arm as if to signify something mysterious which she dared not yet avow.

Maze left them at the railroad station, saying he

had to do a very important errand which he had forgotten for a moment.

As soon as Cachelin was alone with the couple he inquired: "What was the matter with you?"

Cora did not reply at first. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she said: "Nothing. Just a little heartburn."

She walked languidly with a smile upon her lips. Lesable was uncomfortable; his mind was ill at ease, haunted with confused and contradictory ideas, full of desire for luxury, of stifled wrath, of unspeakable shame, of jealous cowardice—he kept quiet like a person half asleep who does not wish to see the sun pouring into the room and casting a ray on the bed.

Cora, who saw he was won over, smiled in a contented and tender manner, and Cachelin, who saw the way clear to the million now, said: "We must celebrate and dine at the restaurant."

They were slightly tipsy when they reached home, and Lesable was unable to go to his dark bed chamber. He stumbled, perhaps by mistake, perhaps by a certain forgetfulness, into his wife's bedroom. And the bed seemed to roll and pitch all night. He was even seasick.

He was very much surprised on awakening to find Cora in his arms.

She opened her eyes, smiled and kissed him with a sudden impulse, full of affection and gratitude. Then she said tenderly: "If you want to be very nice, you won't go to the ministry to-day. You needn't be very exact now that we're rich. And we'll go to the country, both of us, all alone."

He felt comfortable and happy. A hitherto unknown need of laziness paralyzed him body and

soul. One thought only haunted him agreeably: he was going to be rich, independent.

PART VII

From the date of this happy discovery the three relatives lived in perfect harmony. They were joyous, kind and tolerant. Cachelin had resumed his old joviality and Cora overwhelmed her husband with kindness. Lesable himself seemed to be another man, always in good spirits, as he had never been before.

Maze came less often and no longer felt at home among them; he was still received politely, but with more reserve, for happiness is selfish and excludes strangers.

Cachelin himself seemed to be secretly hostile to the handsome clerk whom he had a few months previous introduced with such enthusiasm. It was he who announced the great news to Maze.

Maze feigned surprise and replied: "Well, you're satisfied then?"

Cachelin answered: "Of course," and he noticed his colleague did not appear over-elated.

Maze, however, dined there every Sunday evening. But the conversation lagged, although there had not been a sign of open antipathy between them, and this embarrassment increased as the weeks glided by. One evening, just after his departure, Cachelin exclaimed moodily: "That fellow is beginning to grate on my nerves!"

And Lesable joined in: "The fact is that there

is not much to him, when you know him well." Cora lowered her eyes. She was now uncomfortable in his presence; he seemed to be ashamed before her, no longer smiled at her and offered theater tickets. In fact, it looked as if they could not bear this intimacy which formerly had been so cordial, and it became an unutterable bore to all concerned.

But one Thursday Cora kissed her husband's whiskers more affectionately than usual as she whispered: "You're going to scold me perhaps."

"Why?"

"Well—M. Maze came to see me a little while ago, and as I do not wish to be gossiped about, I asked him never to come unless you were there. He was vexed."

Lesable asked in surprise:

"What did he say?"

"Not much, but it didn't suit me, so I told him to put an end to his visits entirely. You know that I did not introduce him here; it was you and father. So I was afraid you might not be pleased."

A grateful joy filled his heart.

"You did right, and I thank you for it."

She added, to regulate the situation between the two men as she had planned in advance: "At the office you'll act just the same as formerly, only he will not come here any more."

Lesable took his wife into his arms tenderly and kissed her upon the cheeks and eyelids. He reiterated: "You're an angel!"

PART VIII

Cora gave birth to a little girl toward the last days of September. She was called Désirée, but as they were bent upon having an elaborate and solemn baptism, they decided to wait until they had purchased the country home they had dreamed so much about formerly.

They chose it at Asnières, on the hills that overlook the Seine.

Great events took place that winter. As soon as they had inherited the money Cachelin applied for and obtained his retirement. He spent his time carving wood, mostly covers of cigar boxes, with the aid of a scroll-saw. He insisted upon showing his work to every one and expected it to be highly admired.

In his admiration for his own work, he would exclaim: "What astonishing things can be done!"

The assistant chief, M. Rabout, was dead, so Lesable took charge of his duties without being raised to his position as yet, because the requisite time had not elapsed since his last promotion.

Cora had become another woman, more reserved and more elegant, having instinctively divined all the transformations which wealth imposes.

On New Year's Day she made a visit to the chief's wife and was so charming and gracious in asking her to be the godmother of her child that Madame Torchebeuf accepted. Cachelin was to be godfather.

The ceremony took place on a splendid Sunday in June. All the employés of the bureau were invited.

At nine o'clock Lesable was at the station wait-

ing for his principal guest, while a groom in livery, with great gilt buttons, was holding the bridle of a plump pony in front of a brand new phaeton.

Monsieur Torchebeuf alighted from a first-class carriage, with his wife dressed up in a stunning fashion, while Pitolet and Boissel came out of a second-class carriage. They did not dare invite Father Savon, but it had been arranged that they would meet him in the afternoon as if by chance and invite him, with the consent of the chief.

Lesable ran to meet his chief, who was approaching, looking very small in a frock-coat upon the lapel of which shone a decoration like a large red rose in full bloom. His enormous head, surmounted by a large-brimmed hat, made him look like a phenomenon, and his wife, by raising herself ever so little on the tip of her toes, could look over his head.

Léopold was radiant, constantly thanking and bowing to his guests. Then he rushed to his colleagues, begging to be excused for not taking them over in his carriage, as it was too small, and he directed: "Follow the quay and you'll strike the Villa Désirée, the fourth after the turn of the road. That's my villa."

And, jumping into the carriage, he seized the reins and drove off, while the groom leaped lightly on the back seat.

The ceremony went on very smoothly. Then they had luncheon. Each guest found a present under his napkin in proportion to his importance. The godmother received a bracelet of solid gold, her husband a stick-pin with a ruby in it, Boissel a portfolio of Russian leather and Pitolet a meer-

schaum pipe. It was Désirée's present to her new friends, they said.

Madame Torchebeuf blushed with pleasure and confusion and put on the brilliant circlet, while the chief, who wore a bow tie, stuck the pin under his decoration, like another one of inferior order.

Through the window a large strip of river could be seen winding like a ribbon toward Suresnes. The repast at first was solemn, owing to the presence of Monsieur and Madame Torchebeuf. Then a little gaiety crept in. Cachelin risked a few of his coarse jokes. Now that he was rich, every one thought them proper and laughed.

Pitolet and Boissel could not have uttered them, for coming from them they would have been deemed shocking.

At dessert the child was brought in to be kissed by every one. Buried in a mass of lace, it looked at the people with its large blue eyes, vague and questioning, and turned its head as though it were beginning to take notice.

It was now about two. Cachelin proposed to do the honors of the place and then take them for a walk on the banks of the Seine.

They went through the house, from garret to cellar. Then they admired the garden, going from tree to tree, plant to plant, and they disbanded for the promenade.

Cachelin, somewhat embarrassed and intimidated by the presence of the ladies, drew Boissel and Pitolet into a café on the bank of the river, while Mesdames Torchebeuf and Lesable, with their husbands, walked on the other bank, away from the noisy Sunday crowd. They walked slowly, with their hus-

bands following them, talking about the affairs of the ministry.

On the river boats glided by, impelled by the vigorous strokes of young men's strong arms. The women steered, protected from the sun by silk parasols of different colors. Shouts, calls and oaths were exchanged from one boat to another; a distant clamor of human voices, confused and drawling, indicated that somewhere around a joyous crowd was swarming.

Fishing lines were strewed along the banks, while almost naked swimmers were diving from heavy boats into the river.

Madame Torchebeuf looked upon the scene with evident surprise. Cora said: "That is the way it is every Sunday. It spoils the charm for me."

Cora turned her head away contemptuously, saying to her guest: "Let us go elsewhere; these creatures are too degrading!"

And they went away. Monsieur Torchebeuf was saying: "It's sure. On the first day of the year. The director promised me to do it."

Lesable was saying: "Oh, I don't know how to thank you, dear master."

When they arrived at the house they found Cachelin, Boissel and Pitolet laughing till they cried almost, and carrying Old Man Savon, whom they had met with a woman, they said.

The old fellow was protesting: "That's not true. No, it is not. It's not right to do that, Monsieur Cachelin, no, it is not!"

And Cachelin laughed very loud: "Oh, you rascal! You called her your little duckling. We've got you, you bad old boy."

The ladies themselves smiled at his discomfiture.

Cachelin exclaimed: "With Monsieur Torchebeuf's permission we'll keep him a prisoner for dinner."

The chief kindly consented. And the joke was kept up about the abandoned lady, much to Savon's annoyance. He was quite upset about this joke.

This furnished conversation for the whole evening.

Cora and Madame Torchebeuf watched the sunset. The sun cast a purple haze among the leaves. Not the slightest breeze moved the branches; a serene calmness pervaded all and everything.

A few boats passed by now and then.

Cora asked: "It is said that poor Savon married a wretch of a woman?"

Madame Torchebeuf, well informed on all subjects, volunteered: "Yes, an orphan, far too young for him, who left him for a younger, worthless fellow." The stout lady added: "I say he is no good, and yet I have no proof of it. They say it was a love match; at all events, Savon himself is not fascinating."

Madame Lesable replied: "That is not an excuse. Our neighbor, Monsieur Barbon, is in the same boat. His wife fell in love with a painter and ran away with him. I don't know how a woman can lower herself to that extent. Women of that kind should suffer a special punishment for bringing such shame on a family."

At the other side of the alley Désirée appeared, carried by her nurse. The child was approaching the two women, all pink in the reddish-gold tint of the evening. It stared at the fiery sky with the same

calm, serene look that it cast upon the people around it.

All the men approached her, and Cachelin took his granddaughter in his arms and lifted her as if he were going to send her into the sky. Her outline could be seen against the brilliant background, with her long robe hanging almost to the ground.

The grandfather exclaimed: "That's the only true happiness, old Savon, isn't it?"

The old man did not answer, having nothing to say or else too much to think about.

A servant opened the door and announced: "Madame is served."

YVETTE SAMORIS

"THE Comtesse Samoris."

"That lady in black over there?"

"The very one. She's wearing mourning for her daughter, whom she killed."

"You don't mean that seriously? How did she die?"

"Oh! it is a very simple story, without any crime in it, any violence."

"Then what really happened?"

"Almost nothing. Many courtesans are born to be virtuous women, they say; and many women called virtuous are born to be courtesans—is that not so? Now, Madame Samoris, who was born a courtesan, had a daughter born a virtuous woman, that's all."

"I don't quite understand you."

"I'll explain what I mean. The comtesse is nothing but a common, ordinary parvenue originating no one knows where. A Hungarian or Wallachian countess or I know not what. She appeared one winter in apartments she had taken in the Champs Elysées, that quarter for adventurers and adventuresses, and opened her drawing-room to the first comer or to any one that turned up.

"I went there. Why? you will say. I really can't tell you. I went there, as every one goes to such places because the women are facile and the men

are dishonest. You know that set composed of filibusters with varied decorations, all noble, all titled, all unknown at the embassies, with the exception of those who are spies. All talk of their honor without the slightest occasion for doing so, boast of their ancestors, tell you about their lives, braggarts, liars, sharpers, as dangerous as the false cards they have up their sleeves, as delusive as their names —in short, the aristocracy of the bagnio.

"I adore these people. They are interesting to study, interesting to know, amusing to understand, often clever, never commonplace like public functionaries. Their wives are always pretty, with a slight flavor of foreign roguery, with the mystery of their existence, half of it perhaps spent in a house of correction. They have, as a rule, magnificent eyes and incredible hair. I adore them also.

"Madame Samoris is the type of these adventuresses, elegant, mature and still beautiful. Charming feline creatures, you feel that they are vicious to the marrow of their bones. You find them very amusing when you visit them; they give card parties; they have dances and suppers; in short, they offer you all the pleasures of social life.

"And she had a daughter—a tall, fine-looking girl, always ready for amusement, always full of laughter and reckless gaiety—a true adventuress' daughter—but, at the same time, an innocent, unsophisticated, artless girl, who saw nothing, knew nothing, understood nothing of all the things that happened in her father's house.

"The girl was simply a puzzle to me. She was a mystery. She lived amid those infamous surroundings with a quiet, tranquil ease that was either ter-

ribly criminal or else the result of innocence. She sprang from the filth of that class like a beautiful flower fed on corruption."

"How do you know about them?"

"How do I know? That's the funniest part of the business! One morning there was a ring at my door, and my valet came up to tell me that M. Joseph Bonenthal wanted to speak to me. I said directly: 'And who is this gentleman?' My valet replied: 'I don't know, monsieur; perhaps 'tis some one that wants employment.' And so it was. The man wanted me to take him as a servant. I asked him where he had been last. He answered: 'With the Comtesse Samoris.' 'Ah!' said I, 'but my house is not a bit like hers.' 'I know that well, monsieur,' he said, 'and that's the very reason I want to take service with monsieur. I've had enough of these people: a man may stay a little while with them, but he won't remain long with them.' I required an additional man servant at the time and so I took him.

"A month later Mademoiselle Yvette Samoris died mysteriously, and here are all the details of her death I could gather from Joseph, who got them from his sweetheart, the comtesse's chambermaid.

"It was a ball night, and two newly arrived guests were chatting behind a door. Mademoiselle Yvette, who had just been dancing, leaned against this door to get a little air.

"They did not see her approaching, but she heard what they were saying. And this was what they said:

" 'But who is the father of the girl?'

" 'A Russian, it appears; Count Rouvaloff. He never comes near the mother now.'

"'And who is the reigning prince to-day?'

"'That English prince standing near the window; Madame Samoris adores him. But her adoration of any one never lasts longer than a month or six weeks. Nevertheless, as you see, she has a large circle of admirers. All are called—and nearly all are chosen. That kind of thing costs a good deal, but—hang it, what can you expect?'

"'And where did she get this name of Samoris?'

"'From the only man perhaps that she ever loved—a Jewish banker from Berlin who goes by the name of Samuel Morris.'

"'Good. Thanks. Now that I know what kind of woman she is and have seen her, I'm off!'

"What a shock this was to the mind of a young girl endowed with all the instincts of a virtuous woman! What despair overwhelmed that simple soul! What mental tortures quenched her unbounded gaiety, her delightful laughter, her exultant satisfaction with life! What a conflict took place in that youthful heart up to the moment when the last guest had left! Those were things that Joseph could not tell me. But, the same night, Yvette abruptly entered her mother's room just as the comtesse was getting into bed, sent out the lady's maid, who was close to the door, and, standing erect and pale and with great staring eyes, she said:

"'Mamma, listen to what I heard a little while ago during the ball.'

"And she repeated word for word the conversation just as I told it to you.

"The comtesse was so stunned that she did not know what to say in reply at first. When she recovered her self-possession she denied everything and

called God to witness that there was no truth in the story.

"The young girl went away, distracted but not convinced. And she began to watch her mother.

"I remember distinctly the strange alteration that then took place in her. She became grave and melancholy. She would fix on us her great earnest eyes as if she wanted to read what was at the bottom of our hearts. We did not know what to think of her and used to imagine that she was looking out for a husband.

"One evening she overheard her mother talking to her admirer and later saw them together, and her doubts were confirmed. She was heartbroken, and after telling her mother what she had seen, she said coldly, like a man of business laying down the terms of an agreement:

" 'Here is what I have determined to do, mamma: We will both go away to some little town, or rather into the country. We will live there quietly as well as we can. Your jewelry alone may be called a fortune. If you wish to marry some honest man, so much the better; still better will it be if I can find one. If you don't consent to do this, I will kill myself.'

"This time the comtesse ordered her daughter to go to bed and never to speak again in this manner, so unbecoming in the mouth of a child toward her mother.

"Yvette's answer to this was: 'I give you a month to reflect. If, at the end of that month, we have not changed our way of living, I will kill myself, since there is no other honorable issue left to my life.'

"And she left the room.

"At the end of a month the Comtesse Samoris had resumed her usual entertainments, as though nothing had occurred. One day, under the pretext that she had a bad toothache, Yvette purchased a few drops of chloroform from a neighboring chemist. The next day she purchased more, and every time she went out she managed to procure small doses of the narcotic. She filled a bottle with it.

"One morning she was found in bed, lifeless and already quite cold, with a cotton mask soaked in chloroform over her face.

"Her coffin was covered with flowers, the church was hung in white. There was a large crowd at the funeral ceremony.

"Ah! well, if I had known—but you never can know—I would have married that girl, for she was infernally pretty."

"And what became of the mother?"

"Oh! she shed a lot of tears over it. She has only begun to receive visits again for the past week."

"And what explanation is given of the girl's death?"

"Oh! they pretended that it was an accident caused by a new stove, the mechanism of which got out of order. As a good many such accidents have occurred, the thing seemed probable enough."

THE MODÈL

CURVING like a crescent moon, the little town of Étretat, with its white cliffs, its white, shingly beach and its blue sea, lay in the sunlight at high noon one July day. At either extremity of this crescent its two "gates," the smaller to the right, the larger one at the left, stretched forth—one a dwarf and the other a colossal limb—into the water, and the bell tower, almost as tall as the cliff, wide below, narrowing at the top, raised its pointed summit to the sky.

On the sands beside the water a crowd was seated watching the bathers. On the terrace of the Casino another crowd, seated or walking, displayed beneath the brilliant sky a perfect flower patch of bright costumes, with red and blue parasols embroidered with large flowers in silk.

On the walk at the end of the terrace, other persons, the restful, quiet ones, were walking slowly, far from the dressy throng.

A young man, well known and celebrated as a painter, Jean Sumner, was walking with a dejected air beside a wheeled chair in which sat a young woman, his wife. A man-servant was gently pushing the chair, and the crippled woman was gazing sadly at the brightness of the sky, the gladness of the day, and the happiness of others.

They did not speak. They did not look at each other.

"Let us stop a while," said the young woman.

They stopped, and the painter sat down on a camp stool that the servant handed him.

Those who were passing behind the silent and motionless couple looked at them compassionately. A whole legend of devotion was attached to them. He had married her in spite of her infirmity, touched by her affection for him, it was said.

Not far from there, two young men were chatting, seated on a bench and looking out into the horizon.

"No, it is not true; I tell you that I am well acquainted with Jean Sumner."

"But then, why did he marry her? For she was a cripple when she married, was she not?"

"Just so. He married her—he married her—just as every one marries, parbleu! because he was an idiot!"

"But why?"

"But why—but why, my friend? There is no why. People do stupid things just because they do stupid things. And, besides, you know very well that painters make a specialty of foolish marriages. They almost always marry models, former sweethearts, in fact, women of doubtful reputation, frequently. Why do they do this? Who can say? One would suppose that constant association with the general run of models would disgust them forever with that class of women. Not at all. After having posed them they marry them. Read that little book, so true, so cruel and so beautiful, by Alphonse Daudet: 'Artists' Wives.'

"In the case of the couple you see over there the accident occurred in a special and terrible manner.

The little woman played a frightful comedy, or, rather, tragedy. She risked all to win all. Was she sincere? Did she love Jean? Shall we ever know? Who is able to determine precisely how much is put on and how much is real in the actions of a woman? They are always sincere in an eternal mobility of impressions. They are furious, criminal, devoted, admirable and base in obedience to intangible emotions. They tell lies incessantly without intention, without knowing or understanding why, and in spite of it all are absolutely frank in their feelings and sentiments, which they display by violent, unexpected, incomprehensible, foolish resolutions which overthrow our arguments, our customary poise and all our selfish plans. The unforeseenness and suddenness of their determinations will always render them undecipherable enigmas as far as we are concerned. We continually ask ourselves: 'Are they sincere? Are they pretending?'

"But, my friend, they are sincere and insincere at one and the same time, because it is their nature to be extremists in both and to be neither one nor the other.

"See the methods that even the best of them employ to get what they desire. They are complex and simple, these methods. So complex that we can never guess at them beforehand, and so simple that after having been victimized we cannot help being astonished and exclaiming: 'What! Did she make a fool of me so easily as that?'

"And they always succeed, old man, especially when it is a question of getting married.

"But this is Sumner's story:

"The little woman was a model, of course. She posed for him. She was pretty, very stylish-looking, and had a divine figure, it seems. He fancied that he loved her with his whole soul. That is another strange thing. As soon as one likes a woman one sincerely believes that they could not get along without her for the rest of their life. One knows that one has felt the same way before and that disgust invariably succeeded gratification; that in order to pass one's existence side by side with another there must be not a brutal, physical passion which soon dies out, but a sympathy of soul, temperament and temper. One should know how to determine in the enchantment to which one is subjected whether it proceeds from the physical, from a certain sensuous intoxication, or from a deep spiritual charm.

"Well, he believed himself in love; he made her no end of promises of fidelity, and was devoted to her.

"She was really attractive, gifted with that fashionable flippancy that little Parisians so readily affect. She chattered, babbled, made foolish remarks that sounded witty from the manner in which they were uttered. She used graceful gestures which were calculated to attract a painter's eye. When she raised her arms, when she bent over, when she got into a carriage, when she held out her hand to you, her gestures were perfect and appropriate.

"For three months Jean never noticed that, in reality, she was like all other models.

"He rented a little house for her for the summer at Andrésy.

"I was there one evening when for the first time doubts came into my friend's mind.

"As it was a beautiful evening we thought we would take a stroll along the bank of the river. The moon poured a flood of light on the trembling water, scattering yellow gleams along its ripples in the currents and all along the course of the wide, slow river.

"We strolled along the bank, a little enthused by that vague exaltation that these dreamy evenings produce in us. We would have liked to undertake some wonderful task, to love some unknown, deliciously poetic being. We felt ourselves vibrating with raptures, longings, strange aspirations. And we were silent, our beings pervaded by the serene and living coolness of the beautiful night, the coolness of the moonlight, which seemed to penetrate one's body, permeate it, soothe one's spirit, fill it with fragrance and steep it in happiness.

"Suddenly Joséphine (that is her name) uttered an exclamation:

"'Oh, did you see the big fish that jumped, over there?'

"He replied without looking, without thinking:

"'Yes, dear.'

"She was angry.

"'No, you did not see it, for your back was turned.'

"He smiled.

"'Yes, that's true. It is so delightful that I am not thinking of anything.'

"She was silent, but at the end of a minute she felt as if she must say something and asked:

"'Are you going to Paris to-morrow?'

"'I do not know,' he replied.

"She was annoyed again.

"'Do you think it is very amusing to walk along without speaking? People talk when they are not stupid.'

"He did not reply. Then, feeling with her woman's instinct that she was going to make him angry, she began to sing a popular air that had harassed our ears and our minds for two years:

"'Je regardais en l'air.'

"He murmured:

"'Please keep quiet.'

"She replied angrily:

"'Why do you wish me to keep quiet?'

"'You spoil the landscape for us!' he said.

"Then followed a scene, a hateful, idiotic scene, with unexpected reproaches, unsuitable recriminations, then tears. Nothing was left unsaid. They went back to the house. He had allowed her to talk without replying, enervated by the beauty of the scene and dumfounded by this storm of abuse.

"Three months later he strove wildly to free himself from those invincible and invisible bonds with which such a friendship chains our lives. She kept him under her influence, tyrannizing over him, making his life a burden to him. They quarreled continually, vituperating and finally fighting each other.

"He wanted to break with her at any cost. He sold all his canvases, borrowed money from his friends, realizing twenty thousand francs (he was not well known then), and left them for her one morning with a note of farewell.

"He came and took refuge with me.

"About three o'clock that afternoon there was a ring at the bell. I went to the door. A woman

sprang toward me, pushed me aside, came in and went into my atelier. It was she!

"He had risen when he saw her coming.

"She threw the envelope containing the banknotes at his feet with a truly noble gesture and said in a quick tone:

" 'There's your money. I don't want it!'

"She was very pale, trembling and ready undoubtedly to commit any folly. As for him, I saw him grow pale also, pale with rage and exasperation, ready also perhaps to commit any violence.

"He asked:

" 'What do you want?'

"She replied:

" 'I do not choose to be treated like a common woman. You implored me to accept you. I asked you for nothing. Keep me with you!'

"He stamped his foot.

" 'No, that's a little too much! If you think you are going——'

"I had seized his arm.

" 'Keep still, Jean. Let me settle it.'

"I went toward her and quietly, little by little, I began to reason with her, exhausting all the arguments that are used under similar circumstances. She listened to me, motionless, with a fixed gaze, obstinate and silent.

"Finally, not knowing what more to say, and seeing that there would be a scene, I thought of a last resort and said:

" 'He loves you still, my dear, but his family want him to marry some one, and you understand——'

"She gave a start and exclaimed:

" 'Ah! Ah! Now I understand.'

"And turning toward him, she said:

"'You are—you are going to get married?'

"He replied decidedly:

"'Yes.'

"She took a step forward.

"'If you marry, I will kill myself! Do you hear?'

"He shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"'Well, then kill yourself!'

"She stammered out, almost choking with her violent emotion:

"'What do you say? What do you say? What do you say? Say it again!'

"He repeated:

"'Well, then kill yourself if you like!'

"With her face almost livid, she replied:

"'Do not dare me! I will throw myself from the window!'

"He began to laugh, walked toward the window, opened it, and bowing with the gesture of one who desires to let some one else precede him, he said:

"'This is the way. After you!'

"She looked at him for a second with terrible, wild, staring eyes. Then, taking a run as if she were going to jump a hedge in the country, she rushed past me and past him, jumped over the sill and disappeared.

"I shall never forget the impression made on me by that open window after I had seen that body pass through it to fall to the ground. It appeared to me in a second to be as large as the heavens and as hollow as space. And I drew back instinctively, not daring to look at it, as though I feared I might fall out myself.

"Jean, dumfounded, stood motionless.

"They brought the poor girl in with both legs broken. She will never walk again.

"Jean, wild with remorse and also possibly touched with gratitude, made up his mind to marry her.

"There you have it, old man."

It was growing dusk. The young woman felt chilly and wanted to go home, and the servant wheeled the invalid chair in the direction of the village. The painter walked beside his wife, neither of them having exchanged a word for an hour.

This story appeared in *Le Gaulois,* December 17, 1883.

MY TWENTY-FIVE DAYS

I HAD just taken possession of my room in the hotel, a narrow den between two papered partitions, through which I could hear every sound made by my neighbors; and I was beginning to arrange my clothes and linen in the wardrobe with a long mirror, when I opened the drawer which is in this piece of furniture. I immediately noticed a roll of paper. Having opened it, I spread it out before me, and read this title:

My Twenty-five Days.

It was the diary of a guest at the watering place, of the last occupant of my room, and had been forgotten at the moment of departure.

These notes may be of some interest to sensible and healthy persons who never leave their own homes. It is for their benefit that I transcribe them without altering a letter.

"CHÂTEL-GUYON, July 15th.

"At the first glance it is not lively, this country. However, I am going to spend twenty-five days here, to have my liver and stomach treated, and to get thin. The twenty-five days of any one taking the baths are very like the twenty-eight days of the reserves; they are all devoted to fatigue duty, severe

fatigue duty. To-day I have done nothing as yet; I have been getting settled. I have made the acquaintance of the locality and of the doctor. Châtel-Guyon consists of a stream in which flows yellow water, in the midst of several hillocks on which are a casino, some houses, and some stone crosses. On the bank of the stream, at the end of the valley, may be seen a square building surrounded by a little garden; this is the bathing establishment. Sad people wander around this building—the invalids. A great silence reigns in the walks shaded by trees, for this is not a pleasure resort, but a true health resort; one takes care of one's health as a business, and one gets well, so it seems.

"Those who know affirm, even, that the mineral springs perform true miracles here. However, no votive offering is hung around the cashier's office.

"From time to time a gentleman or a lady comes over to a kiosk with a slate roof, which shelters a woman of smiling and gentle aspect and a spring boiling in a basin of cement. Not a word is exchanged between the invalid and the female custodian of the healing water. She hands the newcomer a little glass in which air bubbles sparkle in the transparent liquid. The guest drinks and goes off with a grave step to resume his interrupted walk beneath the trees.

"No noise in the little park, no breath of air in the leaves; no voice passes through this silence. One ought to write at the entrance to this district: 'No one laughs here; they take care of their health.'

"The people who chat resemble mutes who merely open their mouths to simulate sounds, so afraid are they that their voices might escape.

"In the hotel, the same silence. It is a big hotel, where you dine solemnly with people of good position, who have nothing to say to each other. Their manners bespeak good breeding, and their faces reflect the conviction of a superiority of which it might be difficult for some to give actual proofs.

"At two o'clock I made my way up to the Casino, a little wooden hut perched on a hillock, which one reaches by a goat path. But the view from that height is admirable. Châtel-Guyon is situated in a very narrow valley, exactly between the plain and the mountain. I perceive, at the left, the first great billows of the mountains of Auvergne, covered with woods, and here and there big gray patches, hard masses of lava, for we are at the foot of the extinct volcanoes. At the right, through the narrow cut of the valley, I discover a plain, infinite as the sea, steeped in a bluish fog which lets one only dimly discern the villages, the towns, the yellow fields of ripe grain, and the green squares of meadowland shaded with apple trees. It is the Limagne, an immense level, always enveloped in a light veil of vapor.

"The night has come. And now, after having dined alone, I write these lines beside my open window. I hear, over there, in front of me, the little orchestra of the Casino, which plays airs just as a foolish bird might sing all alone in the desert.

"A dog barks at intervals. This great calm does one good. Good night.

"*July 16th.*—Nothing new. I have taken a bath and then a shower bath. I have swallowed three glasses of water, and I have walked along the paths in the park, a quarter of an hour between each glass,

then half an hour after the last. I have begun my twenty-five days.

"*July 17th.*—Remarked two mysterious, pretty women who are taking their baths and their meals after every one else has finished.

"*July 18th.*—Nothing new.

"*July 19th.*—Saw the two pretty women again. They have style and a little indescribable air which I like very much.

"*July 20th.*—Long walk in a charming wooded valley, as far as the Hermitage of Sans-Souci. This country is delightful, although sad; but so calm, so sweet, so green. One meets along the mountain roads long wagons loaded with hay, drawn by two cows at a slow pace, or held back by them in going down the slopes with a great effort of their heads, which are yoked together. A man with a big black hat on his head is driving them with a slender stick, tipping them on the side or on the forehead; and often with a simple gesture, an energetic and serious gesture, he suddenly halts them when the excessive load precipitates their journey down the too rugged descents.

"The air is good to inhale in these valleys. And, if it is very warm, the dust bears with it a light odor of vanilla and of the stable, for so many cows pass over these routes that they leave reminders everywhere. And this odor is a perfume, when it would be a stench if it came from other animals.

"*July 21st.*—Excursion to the valley of the Enval. It is a narrow gorge inclosed by superb rocks at the very foot of the mountain. A stream flows amid the heaped-up boulders.

"As I reached the bottom of this ravine I heard

women's voices, and I soon perceived the two mysterious ladies of my hotel, who were chatting, seated on a stone.

"The occasion appeared to me a good one, and I introduced myself without hesitation. My overtures were received without embarrassment. We walked back together to the hotel. And we talked about Paris. They knew, it seemed, many people whom I knew, too. Who can they be?

"I shall see them to-morrow. There is nothing more amusing than such meetings as this.

"*July 22d.*—Day passed almost entirely with the two unknown ladies. They are very pretty, by Jove!—one a brunette and the other a blonde. They say they are widows. H'm? . . .

"I offered to accompany them to Royat to-morrow, and they accepted my offer.

"Châtel-Guyon is less sad than I thought on my arrival.

"*July 23d.*—Day spent at Royat. Royat is a little patch of hotels at the bottom of a valley, at the gate of Clermont-Ferrand. A great many people there. A large park full of life. Superb view of the Puy-de-Dôme, seen at the end of a perspective of valleys.

"My fair companions are very popular, which is flattering to me. The man who escorts a pretty woman always believes himself crowned with an aureole; with much more reason, the man who is accompanied by one on each side of him. Nothing is so pleasant as to dine in a fashionable restaurant with a female companion at whom everybody stares, and there is nothing better calculated to exalt a man in the estimation of his neighbors.

"To go to the Bois, in a trap drawn by a sorry

nag, or to go out into the boulevard escorted by a plain woman, are the two most humiliating things that could happen to a sensitive heart that values the opinion of others. Of all luxuries, woman is the rarest and the most distinguished; she is the one that costs most and which we desire most; she is, therefore, the one that we should seek by preference to exhibit to the jealous eyes of the world.

"To exhibit to the world a pretty woman leaning on your arm is to excite, all at once, every kind of jealousy. It is as much as to say: 'Look here! I am rich, since I possess this rare and costly object; I have taste, since I have known how to discover this pearl; perhaps, even, I am loved by her, unless I am deceived by her, which would still prove that others also consider her charming.'

"But what a disgrace it is to walk about town with an ugly woman!

"And how many humiliating things this gives people to understand!

"In the first place, they assume she must be your wife, for how could it be supposed that you would have an unattractive sweetheart? A true woman may be ungraceful; but then, her ugliness implies a thousand disagreeable things for you. One supposes you must be a notary or a magistrate, as these two professions have a monopoly of grotesque and well-dowered spouses. Now, is this not distressing to a man? And then, it seems to proclaim to the public that you have the odious courage, and are even under a legal obligation, to caress that ridiculous face and that ill-shaped body, and that you will, without doubt, be shameless enough to make a

mother of this by no means desirable being—which is the very height of the ridiculous.

"*July 24th.*—I never leave the side of the two unknown widows, whom I am beginning to know quite well. This country is delightful and our hotel is excellent. Good season. The treatment is doing me an immense amount of good.

"*July 25th.*—Drive in a landau to the lake of Tazenat. An exquisite and unexpected jaunt decided on at luncheon. We started immediately on rising from table. After a long journey through the mountains we suddenly perceived an admirable little lake, quite round, very blue, clear as glass, and situated at the bottom of an extinct crater. One side of this immense basin is barren, the other is wooded. In the midst of the trees is a small house where sleeps a good-natured, intellectual man, a sage who passes his days in this Virgilian region. He opens his dwelling for us. An idea comes into my head. I exclaim:

"'Supposing we bathe?'

"'Yes,' they said, 'but costumes.'

"'Bah! we are in the wilderness.'

"'And we did bathe! . . .

"If I were a poet, how I would describe this unforgetable vision of those lissome young forms in the transparency of the water! The high, sloping sides shut in the lake, motionless, gleaming and round, as a silver coin; the sun pours into it a flood of warm light; and along the rocks the fair forms move in the almost invisible water in which the swimmers seemed suspended. On the sand at the bottom of the lake one could see their shadows as they moved along.

"July 26th.—Some persons seem to look with shocked and disapproving eyes at my rapid intimacy with the two fair widows. There are some people, then, who imagine that life consists in being bored. Everything that appears to be amusing becomes immediately a breach of good breeding or morality. For them duty has inflexible and mortally tedious rules.

"I would draw their attention, with all respect, to the fact that duty is not the same for Mormons, Arabs, Zulus, Turks, Englishmen, and Frenchmen, and that there are very virtuous people among all these nations.

"I will cite a single example. As regards women, duty begins in England at nine years of age; in France at fifteen. As for me, I take a little of each people's notion of duty, and of the whole I make a result comparable to the morality of good King Solomon.

"July 27th.—Good news. I have lost 620 grams in weight. Excellent, this water of Châtel-Guyon! I am taking the widows to dine at Riom. A sad town whose anagram constitutes it an objectionable neighbor to healing springs: Riom, Mori.

"July 28th.—Hello, how's this! My two widows have been visited by two gentlemen who came to look for them. Two widowers, without doubt. They are leaving this evening. They have written to me on fancy notepaper.

"July 29th.—Alone! Long excursion on foot to the extinct crater of Nachère. Splendid view.

"July 30th.—Nothing. I am taking the treatment.

"July 31st.—Ditto. Ditto. This pretty country is full of polluted streams. I am drawing the notice

of the municipality to the abominable sewer which poisons the road in front of the hotel. All the kitchen refuse of the establishment is thrown into it. This is a good way to breed cholera.

"*August 1st.*—Nothing. The treatment.

"*August 2d.*—Admirable walk to Châteauneuf, a place of sojourn for rheumatic patients, where everybody is lame. Nothing can be queerer than this population of cripples!

"*August 3d.*—Nothing. The treatment.

"*August 4th.*—Ditto. Ditto.

"*August 5th.*—Ditto. Ditto.

"*August 6th.*—Despair! I have just weighed myself. I have gained 310 grams. But then? . . .

"*August 7th.*—Drove sixty-six kilometres in a carriage on the mountain. I will not mention the name of the country through respect for its women.

"This excursion had been pointed out to me as a beautiful one, and one that was rarely made. After four hours on the road, I arrived at a rather pretty village on the banks of a river in the midst of an admirable wood of walnut trees. I had not yet seen a forest of walnut trees of such dimensions in Auvergne. It constitutes, moreover, all the wealth of the district, for it is planted on the village common. This common was formerly only a hillside covered with brushwood. The authorities had tried in vain to get it cultivated. There was scarcely enough pasture on it to feed a few sheep.

"To-day it is a superb wood, thanks to the women, and it has a curious name: it is called *the Sins of the Curé.*

"Now I must say that the women of the mountain districts have the reputation of being light, lighter

than in the plain. A bachelor who meets them owes them at least a kiss; and if he does not take more he is only a blockhead. If we consider this fairly, this way of looking at the matter is the only one that is logical and reasonable. As woman, whether she be of the town or the country, has her natural mission to please man, man should always show her that she pleases him. If he abstains from every sort of demonstration, this means that he considers her ugly; it is almost an insult to her. If I were a woman, I would not receive, a second time, a man who failed to show me respect at our first meeting, for I would consider that he had failed in appreciation of my beauty, my charm, and my feminine qualities.

"So the bachelors of the village X——— often proved to the women of the district that they found them to their taste, and, as the curé was unable to prevent these demonstrations, as gallant as they were natural, he resolved to utilize them for the benefit of the general prosperity. So he imposed as a penance on every woman who had gone wrong that she should plant a walnut tree on the common. And every night lanterns were seen moving about like will-o'-the-wisps on the hillock, for the erring ones scarcely like to perform their penance in broad daylight.

"In two years there was no longer any room on the lands belonging to the village, and to-day they calculate that there are more than three thousand trees around the belfry which rings out the services amid their foliage. These are *the Sins of the Curé.*

"Since we have been seeking for so many ways of rewooding France, the Administration of Forests

might surely enter into some arrangement with the clergy to employ a method so simple as that employed by this humble curé.

"*August 7th.*—Treatment.

"*August 8th.*—I am packing up my trunks and saying good-by to the charming little district so calm and silent, to the green mountain, to the quiet valleys, to the deserted Casino, from which you can see, almost veiled by its light, bluish mist, the immense plain of the Limagne.

"I shall leave to-morrow."

Here the manuscript stopped. I will add nothing to it, my impressions of the country not having been exactly the same as those of my predecessor. For I did not find the two widows!

"THE TERROR"

YOU say you cannot possibly understand it, and I believe you. You think I am losing my mind? Perhaps I am, but for other reasons than those you imagine, my dear friend.

Yes, I am going to be married, and will tell you what has led me to take that step.

I may add that I know very little of the girl who is going to become my wife to-morrow; I have only seen her four or five times. I know that there is nothing unpleasing about her, and that is enough for my purpose. She is small, fair, and stout; so, of course, the day after to-morrow I shall ardently wish for a tall, dark, thin woman.

She is not rich, and belongs to the middle classes. She is a girl such as you may find by the gross, well adapted for matrimony, without any apparent faults, and with no particularly striking qualities. People say of her:

"Mlle. Lajolle is a very nice girl," and to-morrow they will say: "What a very nice woman Madame Raymon is." She belongs, in a word, to that immense number of girls whom one is glad to have for one's wife, till the moment comes when one discovers that one happens to prefer all other women to that particular woman whom one has married.

"Well," you will say to me, "what on earth did you get married for?"

I hardly like to tell you the strange and seemingly improbable reason that urged me on to this senseless act; the fact, however, is that I am afraid of being alone.

I don't know how to tell you or to make you understand me, but my state of mind is so wretched that you will pity me and despise me.

I do not want to be alone any longer at night. I want to feel that there is some one close to me, touching me, a being who can speak and say something, no matter what it be.

I wish to be able to awaken somebody by my side, so that I may be able to ask some sudden question, a stupid question even, if I feel inclined, so that I may hear a human voice, and feel that there is some waking soul close to me, some one whose reason is at work; so that when I hastily light the candle I may see some human face by my side—because—because—I am ashamed to confess it—because I am afraid of being alone.

Oh, you don't understand me yet.

I am not afraid of any danger; if a man were to come into the room, I should kill him without trembling. I am not afraid of ghosts, nor do I believe in the supernatural. I am not afraid of dead people, for I believe in the total annihilation of every being that disappears from the face of this earth.

Well—yes, well, it must be told: I am afraid of myself, afraid of that horrible sensation of incomprehensible fear.

You may laugh, if you like. It is terrible, and I cannot get over it. I am afraid of the walls, of the furniture, of the familiar objects; which are animated, as far as I am concerned, by a kind of ani-

mal life. Above all, I am afraid of my own dreadful thoughts, of my reason, which seems as if it were about to leave me, driven away by a mysterious and invisible agony.

At first I feel a vague uneasiness in my mind, which causes a cold shiver to run all over me. I look round, and of course nothing is to be seen, and I wish that there were something there, no matter what, as long as it were something tangible. I am frightened merely because I cannot understand my own terror.

If I speak, I am afraid of my own voice. If I walk, I am afraid of I know not what, behind the door, behind the curtains, in the cupboard, or under my bed, and yet all the time I know there is nothing anywhere, and I turn round suddenly because I am afraid of what is behind me, although there is nothing there, and I know it.

I become agitated. I feel that my fear increases, and so I shut myself up in my own room, get into bed, and hide under the clothes; and there, cowering down, rolled into a ball, I close my eyes in despair, and remain thus for an indefinite time, remembering that my candle is alight on the table by my bedside, and that I ought to put it out, and yet—I dare not do it!

It is very terrible, is it not, to be like that?

Formerly I felt nothing of all that. I came home quite calm, and went up and down my apartment without anything disturbing my peace of mind. Had any one told me that I should be attacked by a malady—for I can call it nothing else—of most improbable fear, such a stupid and terrible malady as it is, I should have laughed outright. I was certainly

never afraid of opening the door in the dark. I went to bed slowly, without locking it, and never got up in the middle of the night to make sure that everything was firmly closed.

It began last year in a very strange manner on a damp autumn evening. When my servant had left the room, after I had dined, I asked myself what I was going to do. I walked up and down my room for some time, feeling tired without any reason for it, unable to work, and even without energy to read. A fine rain was falling, and I felt unhappy, a prey to one of those fits of despondency, without any apparent cause, which make us feel inclined to cry, or to talk, no matter to whom, so as to shake off our depressing thoughts.

I felt that I was alone, and my rooms seemed to me to be more empty than they had ever been before. I was in the midst of infinite and overwhelming solitude. What was I to do? I sat down, but a kind of nervous impatience seemed to affect my legs, so I got up and began to walk about again. I was, perhaps, rather feverish, for my hands, which I had clasped behind me, as one often does when walking slowly, almost seemed to burn one another. Then suddenly a cold shiver ran down my back, and I thought the damp air might have penetrated into my rooms, so I lit the fire for the first time that year, and sat down again and looked at the flames. But soon I felt that I could not possibly remain quiet, and so I got up again and determined to go out, to pull myself together, and to find a friend to bear me company.

I could not find any one, so I walked to the

boulevard to try and meet some acquaintance or other there.

It was wretched everywhere, and the wet pavement glistened in the gaslight, while the oppressive warmth of the almost impalpable rain lay heavily over the streets and seemed to obscure the light of the lamps.

I went on slowly, saying to myself: "I shall not find a soul to talk to."

I glanced into several cafés, from the Madeleine as far as the Faubourg Poissonière, and saw many unhappy-looking individuals sitting at the tables, who did not seem even to have enough energy left to finish the refreshments they had ordered.

For a long time I wandered aimlessly up and down, and about midnight I started for home. I was very calm and very tired. My janitor opened the door at once, which was quite unusual for him, and I thought that another lodger had probably just come in.

When I go out I always double-lock the door of my room, and I found it merely closed, which surprised me; but I supposed that some letters had been brought up for me in the course of the evening.

I went in, and found my fire still burning so that it lighted up the room a little, and, while in the act of taking up a candle, I noticed somebody sitting in my armchair by the fire, warming his feet, with his back toward me.

I was not in the slightest degree frightened. I thought, very naturally, that some friend or other had come to see me. No doubt the porter, to whom I had said I was going out, had lent him his own key. In a moment I remembered all the circum-

stances of my return, how the street door had been opened immediately, and that my own door was only latched and not locked.

I could see nothing of my friend but his head, and he had evidently gone to sleep while waiting for me, so I went up to him to rouse him. I saw him quite distinctly; his right arm was hanging down and his legs were crossed; the position of his head, which was somewhat inclined to the left of the armchair, seemed to indicate that he was asleep. "Who can it be?" I asked myself. I could not see clearly, as the room was rather dark, so I put out my hand to touch him on the shoulder, and it came in contact with the back of the chair. There was nobody there; the seat was empty.

I fairly jumped with fright. For a moment I drew back as if confronted by some terrible danger; then I turned round again, impelled by an imperious standing upright, panting with fear, so upset that I could not collect my thoughts, and ready to faint.

But I am a cool man, and soon recovered myself. I thought: "It is a mere hallucination, that is all," and I immediately began to reflect on this phenomenon. Thoughts fly quickly at such moments.

I had been suffering from an hallucination, that was an incontestable fact. My mind had been perfectly lucid and had acted regularly and logically, so there was nothing the matter with the brain. It was only my eyes that had been deceived; they had had a vision, one of those visions which lead simple folk to believe in miracles. It was a nervous seizure of the optical apparatus, nothing more; the eyes were rather congested, perhaps.

I lit my candle, and when I stooped down to the

fire in doing so I noticed that I was trembling, and I raised myself up with a jump, as if somebody had touched me from behind.

I was certanly not by any means calm.

I walked up and down a little, and hummed a tune or two. Then I double-locked the door and felt rather reassured; now, at any rate, nobody could come in.

I sat down again and thought over my adventure for a long time; then I went to bed and blew out my light.

For some minutes all went well; I lay quietly on my back, but presently an irresistible desire seized me to look round the room, and I turned over on my side.

My fire was nearly out, and the few glowing embers threw a faint light on the floor by the chair, where I fancied I saw the man sitting again.

I quickly struck a match, but I had been mistaken; there was nothing there. I got up, however, and hid the chair behind my bed, and tried to get to sleep, as the room was now dark; but I had not forgotten myself for more than five minutes, when in my dream I saw all the scene which I had previously witnessed as clearly as if it were reality. I woke up with a start, and having lit the candle, sat up in bed, without venturing even to try to go to sleep again.

Twice, however, sleep overcame me for a few moments in spite of myself, and twice I saw the same thing again, till I fancied I was going mad. When day broke, however, I thought that I was cured, and slept peacefully till noon.

It was all past and over. I had been feverish,

had had the nightmare. I know not what. I had been ill, in fact, but yet thought I was a great fool.

I enjoyed myself thoroughly that evening. I dined at a restaurant and afterward went to the theatre, and then started for home. But as I got near the house I was once more seized by a strange feeling of uneasiness. I was afraid of seeing him again. I was not afraid of him, not afraid of his presence, in which I did not believe; but I was afraid of being deceived again. I was afraid of some fresh hallucination, afraid lest fear should take possession of me.

For more than an hour I wandered up and down the pavement; then, feeling that I was really too foolish, I returned home. I breathed so hard that I could hardly get upstairs, and remained standing outside my door for more than ten minutes; then suddenly I had a courageous impulse and my will asserted itself. I inserted my key into the lock, and went into the apartment with a candle in my hand. I kicked open my bedroom door, which was partly open, and cast a frightened glance toward the fireplace. There was nothing there. A-h! . . .

What a relief and what a delight! What a deliverance! I walked up and down briskly and boldly, but I was not altogether reassured, and kept turning round with a jump; the very shadows in the corners disquieted me.

I slept badly, and was constantly disturbed by imaginary noises, but did not see him; no, that was all over.

Since that time I have been afraid of being alone at night. I feel that the spectre is there, close to me, around me; but it has not appeared to me again.

And supposing it did, what would it matter, since I do not believe in it, and know that it is nothing?

However, it still worries me, because I am constantly thinking of it. *His right arm hanging down and his head inclined to the left like a man who was asleep*—— I don't want to think about it!

Why, however, am I so persistently possessed with this idea? His feet were close to the fire!

He haunts me; it is very stupid, but who and what is he? I know that he does not exist except in my cowardly imagination, in my fears, and in my agony. There—enough of that!

Yes, it is all very well for me to reason with myself, *to stiffen my backbone,* so to say; but I cannot remain at home because I know he is there. I know I shall not see him again; he will not show himself again; that is all over. But he is there, all the same, in my thoughts. He remains invisible, but that does not prevent his being there. He is behind the doors, in the closed cupboard, in the wardrobe, under the bed, in every dark corner. If I open the door or the cupboard, if I take the candle to look under the bed and throw a light on the dark places, he is there no longer, but I feel that he is behind me. I turn round, certain that I shall not see him, that I shall never see him again; but for all that, he is behind me.

It is very stupid, it is dreadful; but what am I to do? I cannot help it.

But if there were two of us in the place I feel certain that he would not be there any longer, for he is there just because I am alone, simply and solely because I am alone!

LEGEND OF MONT ST. MICHEL

I HAD first seen it from Cancale, this fairy castle in the sea. I got an indistinct impression of it as of a gray shadow outlined against the misty sky. I saw it again from Avranches at sunset. The immense stretch of sand was red, the horizon was red, the whole boundless bay was red. The rocky castle rising out there in the distance like a weird, seignorial residence, like a dream palace, strange and beautiful—this alone remained black in the crimson light of the dying day.

The following morning at dawn I went toward it across the sands, my eyes fastened on this gigantic jewel, as big as a mountain, cut like a cameo, and as dainty as lace. The nearer I approached the greater my admiration grew, for nothing in the world could be more wonderful or more perfect.

As surprised as if I had discovered the habitation of a god, I wandered through those halls supported by frail or massive columns, raising my eyes in wonder to those spires which looked like rockets starting for the sky, and to that marvellous assemblage of towers, of gargoyles, of slender and charming ornaments, a regular fireworks of stone, granite lace, a masterpiece of colossal and delicate architecture.

As I was looking up in ecstasy a Lower Normandy peasant came up to me and told me the story

of the great quarrel between Saint Michael and the devil.

A sceptical genius has said: "God made man in his image and man has returned the compliment."

This saying is an eternal truth, and it would be very curious to write the history of the local divinity of every continent, as well as the history of the patron saints in each one of our provinces. The negro has his ferocious man-eating idols; the polygamous Mahometan fills his paradise with women; the Greeks, like a practical people, deified all the passions.

Every village in France is under the influence of some protecting saint, modelled according to the characteristics of the inhabitants.

Saint Michael watches over Lower Normandy, Saint Michael, the radiant and victorious angel, the sword-carrier, the hero of Heaven, the victorious, the conqueror of Satan.

But this is how the Lower Normandy peasant, cunning, deceitful and tricky, understands and tells of the struggle between the great saint and the devil.

To escape from the malice of his neighbor, the devil, Saint Michael built himself, in the open ocean, this habitation worthy of an archangel; and only such a saint could build a residence of such magnificence.

But, as he still feared the approaches of the wicked one, he surrounded his domains by quicksands, more treacherous even than the sea.

The devil lived in a humble cottage on the hill, but he owned all the salt marshes, the rich lands where grow the finest crops, the wooded valleys and all the fertile hills of the country, while the saint

ruled only over the sands. Therefore Satan was rich, whereas Saint Michael was as poor as a church mouse.

After a few years of fasting the saint grew tired of this state of affairs and began to think of some compromise with the devil, but the matter was by no means easy, as Satan kept a good hold on his crops.

He thought the thing over for about six months; then one morning he walked across to the shore. The demon was eating his soup in front of his door when he saw the saint. He immediately rushed toward him, kissed the hem of his sleeve, invited him in and offered him refreshments.

Saint Michael drank a bowl of milk and then began: "I have come here to propose to you a good bargain."

The devil, candid and trustful, answered: "That will suit me."

"Here it is. Give me all your lands."

Satan, growing alarmed, wished to speak: "But——"

She saint continued: "Listen first. Give me all your lands. I will take care of all the work, the ploughing, the sowing, the fertilizing, everything, and we will share the crops equally. How does that suit you?"

The devil, who was naturally lazy, accepted. He only demanded in addition a few of those delicious gray mullet which are caught around the solitary mount. Saint Michael promised the fish.

They grasped hands and spat on the ground to show that it was a bargain, and the saint continued: "See here, so that you will have nothing to complain

of, choose that part of the crops which you prefer: the part that grows above ground or the part that stays in the ground." Satan cried out: "I will take all that will be above ground."

"It's a bargain!" said the saint. And he went away.

Six months later, all over the immense domain of the devil, one could see nothing but carrots, turnips, onions, salsify, all the plants whose juicy roots are good and savory and whose useless leaves are good for nothing but for feeding animals.

Satan wished to break the contract, calling Saint Michael a swindler.

But the saint, who had developed quite a taste for agriculture, went back to see the devil and said: "Really, I hadn't thought of that at all; it was just an accident, no fault of mine. And to make things fair with you, this year I'll let you take everything that is under the ground."

"Very well," answered Satan.

The following spring all the evil spirit's lands were covered with golden wheat, oats as big as beans, flax, magnificent colza, red clover, peas, cabbage, artichokes, everything that develops into grains or fruit in the sunlight.

Once more Satan received nothing, and this time he completely lost his temper. He took back his fields and remained deaf to all the fresh propositions of his neighbor.

A whole year rolled by. From the top of his lonely manor Saint Michael looked at the distant and fertile lands and watched the devil direct the work, take in his crops and thresh the wheat. And he grew angry, exasperated at his powerlessness.

As he was no longer able to deceive Satan, he decided to wreak vengeance on him, and he went out to invite him to dinner for the following Monday.

"You have been very unfortunate in your dealings with me," he said; "I know it, but I don't want any ill feeling between us, and I expect you to dine with me. I'll give you some good things to eat."

Satan, who was as greedy as he was lazy, accepted eagerly. On the day appointed he donned his finest clothes and set out for the castle.

Saint Michael sat him down to a magnificent meal. First there was a *vol-au-vent,* full of cocks' crests and kidneys, with meat-balls, then two big gray mullet with cream sauce, a turkey stuffed with chestnuts soaked in wine, some salt-marsh lamb as tender as cake, vegetables which melted in the mouth and nice hot pancake which was brought on smoking and spreading a delicious odor of butter.

They drank new, sweet, sparkling cider and heady red wine, and after each course they whetted their appetites with some old apple brandy.

The devil drank and ate to his heart's content; in fact he took so much that he was very uncomfortable, and began to retch.

Then Saint Michael arose in anger and cried in a voice like thunder: "What! before me, rascal! You dare—before me——"

Satan, terrified, ran away, and the saint, seizing a stick, pursued him. They ran through the halls, turning round the pillars, running up the staircases, galloping along the cornices, jumping from gargoyle to gargoyle. The poor devil, who was woefully ill, was running about madly and trying hard to escape. At last he found himself at the top of the

last terrace, right at the top, from which could be seen the immense bay, with its distant towns, sands and pastures. He could no longer escape, and the saint came up behind him and gave him a furious kick, which shot him through space like a cannon-ball.

He shot through the air like a javelin and fell heavily before the town of Mortain. His horns and claws stuck deep into the rock, which keeps through eternity the traces of this fall of Satan.

He stood up again, limping, crippled until the end of time, and as he looked at this fatal castle in the distance, standing out against the setting sun, he understood well that he would always be vanquished in this unequal struggle, and he went away limping, heading for distant countries, leaving to his enemy his fields, his hills, his valleys and his marshes.

And this is how Saint Michael, the patron saint of Normandy, vanquished the devil.

Another people would have dreamed of this battle in an entirely different manner.

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

JACQUES DE RANDAL, having dined at home alone, told his valet he might go out, and he sat down at his table to write some letters.

He ended every year in this manner, writing and dreaming. He reviewed the events of his life since last New Year's Day, things that were now all over and dead; and, in proportion as the faces of his friends rose up before his eyes, he wrote them a few lines, a cordial New Year's greeting on the first of January.

So he sat down, opened a drawer, took out of it a woman's photograph, gazed at it a few moments, and kissed it. Then, having laid it beside a sheet of notepaper, he began:

MY DEAR IRENE: You must by this time have received the little souvenir I sent you addressed to the maid. I have shut myself up this evening in order to tell you——"

The pen here ceased to move. Jacques rose up and began walking up and down the room.

For the last ten months he had had a sweetheart, not like the others, a woman with whom one engages in a passing intrigue, of the theatrical world or the *demi-monde,* but a woman whom he loved and won. He was no longer a young man, although he was still comparatively young for a man, and he

looked on life seriously in a positive and practical spirit.

Accordingly, he drew up the balance sheet of his passion, as he drew up every year the balance sheet of friendships that were ended or freshly contracted, of circumstances and persons that had entered into his life.

His first ardor of love having grown calmer, he asked himself with the precision of a merchant making a calculation what was the state of his heart with regard to her, and he tried to form an idea of what it would be in the future.

He found there a great and deep affection, made up of tenderness, gratitude and the thousand subtle ties which give birth to long and powerful attachments.

A ring at the bell made him start. He hesitated. Should he open the door? But he said to himself that one must always open the door on New Year's night, to admit the unknown who is passing by and knocks, no matter who it may be.

So he took a wax candle, passed through the antechamber, drew back the bolts, turned the key, pulled the door back, and saw his sweetheart standing pale as a corpse, leaning against the wall.

He stammered:

"What is the matter with you?"

She replied:

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Without servants?"

"Yes."

"You are not going out?"

"No."

She entered with the air of a woman who knew the house. As soon as she was in the drawing-room, she sank down on the sofa, and, covering her face with her hands, began to weep bitterly.

He knelt down at her feet, and tried to remove her hands from her eyes, so that he might look at them, and exclaimed:

"Irene, Irene, what is the matter with you? I implore you to tell me what is the matter with you?"

Then, amid her sobs, she murmured:

"I can no longer live like this."

"Live like this? What do you mean?"

"Yes. I can no longer live like this. I have endured so much. He struck me this afternoon."

"Who? Your husband?"

"Yes, my husband."

"Ah!"

He was astonished, having never suspected that her husband could be brutal. He was a man of the world, of the better class, a clubman, a lover of horses, a theatergoer and an expert swordsman; he was known, talked about, appreciated everywhere, having very courteous manners, a very mediocre intellect, an absence of education and of the real culture needed in order to think like all well-bred people, and finally a respect for conventionalities.

He appeared to devote himself to his wife, as a man ought to do in the case of wealthy and well-bred people. He displayed enough of anxiety about her wishes, her health, her dresses, and, beyond that, left her perfectly free.

Randal, having become Irene's friend, had a

right to the affectionate hand-clasp which every husband endowed with good manners owes to his wife's intimate acquaintance. Then, when Jacques, after having been for some time the friend, became the lover, his relations with the husband were more cordial, as is fitting.

Jacques had never dreamed that there were storms in this household, and he was bewildered at this unexpected revelation.

He asked:

"How did it happen? Tell me."

Thereupon she related a long story, the entire history of her life since the day of her marriage, the first disagreement arising out of a mere nothing, then becoming accentuated at every new difference of opinion between two dissimilar dispositions.

Then came quarrels, a complete separation, not apparent, but real; next, her husband showed himself aggressive, suspicious, violent. Now, he was jealous, jealous of Jacques, and that very day, after a scene, he had struck her.

She added with decision: "I will not go back to him. Do with me what you like."

Jacques sat down opposite to her, their knees touching. He took her h nds:

"My dear love, you are going t. commit a gross, an irreparable folly. If you want to leave your husband, put him in the wrong, so that your position as a woman of the world may be saved."

She asked, as she looked at him uneasily:

"Then, what do you advise me?"

"To go back home and to put up with your life there till the day when you can obtain either a separation or a divorce, with the honors of war."

"Is not this thing which you advise me to do a little cowardly?"

"No; it is wise and sensible. You have a high position, a reputation to protect, friends to preserve and relations to deal with. You must not lose all these through a mere caprice."

She rose up, and said with violence:

"Well, no! I cannot stand it any longer! It is at an end! it is at an end!"

Then, placing her two hands on her lover's shoulders, and looking him straight in the face, she asked:

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes."

"Then take care of me."

He exclaimed:

"Take care of you? In my own house? Here? Why, you are mad. It would mean losing you forever; losing you beyond hope of recall! You are mad!"

She replied, slowly and seriously, like a woman who feels the weight of her words:

"Listen, Jacques. He has forbidden me to see you again, and I will not play this comedy of coming secretly to your house. You must either lose me or take me."

"My dear Irene, in that case, obtain your divorce, and I will marry you."

"Yes, you will marry me in—two years at the soonest. Yours is a patient love."

"Look here! Reflect! If you remain here he'll come to-morrow to take you away, seeing that he is

your husband, seeing that he has right and law on his side."

"I did not ask you to keep me in your own house, Jacques, but to take me anywhere you like. I thought you loved me enough to do that. I have made a mistake. Good-by!"

She turned round and went toward the door so quickly that he was only able to catch hold of her when she was outside the room:

"Listen, Irene."

She struggled, and would not listen to him. Her eyes were full of tears, and she stammered:

"Let me alone! let me alone! let me alone!"

He made her sit down by force, and once more falling on his knees at her feet, he now brought forward a number of arguments and counsels to make her understand the folly and terrible risk of her project. He omitted nothing which he deemed necessary to convince her, finding even in his very affection for her incentives to persuasion.

As she remained silent and cold as ice, he begged of her, implored of her to listen to him, to trust him, to follow his advice.

When he had finished speaking, she only replied:

"Are you disposed to let me go away now? Take away your hands, so that I may rise to my feet."

"Look here, Irene."

"Will you let me go?"

"Irene—is your resolution irrevocable?"

"Will you let me go."

"Tell me only whether this resolution, this mad resolution of yours, which you will bitterly regret, is irrevocable?"

"Yes—let me go!"

"Then stay. You know well that you are at home here. We shall go away to-morrow morning."

She rose to her feet in spite of him, and said in a hard tone:

"No. It is too late. I do not want sacrifice; I do not want devotion."

"Stay! I have done what I ought to do; I have said what I ought to say. I have no further responsibility on your behalf. My conscience is at peace. Tell me what you want me to do, and I will obey."

She resumed her seat, looked at him for a long time, and then asked, in a very calm voice:

"Well, then, explain."

"Explain what? What do you wish me to explain?"

"Everything—everything that you thought about before changing your mind. Then I will see what I ought to do."

"But I thought about nothing at all. I had to warn you that you were going to commit an act of folly. You persist; then I ask to share in this act of folly, and I even insist on it."

"It is not natural to change one's mind so quickly."

"Listen, my dear love. It is not a question here of sacrifice or devotion. On the day when I realized that I loved you, I said to myself what every lover ought to say to himself in the same case: 'The man who loves a woman, who makes an effort to win her, who gets her, and who takes her, enters into a sacred contract with himself and with her. That is, of course, in dealing with a woman like

you, not a woman with a fickle heart and easily impressed.'

"Marriage which has a great social value, a great legal value, possesses in my eyes only a very slight moral value, taking into account the conditions under which it generally takes place.

"Therefore, when a woman, united by this lawful bond, but having no attachment to her husband, whom she cannot love, a woman whose heart is free, meets a man whom she cares for, and gives herself to him, when a man who has no other tie, takes a woman in this way, I say that they pledge themselves toward each other by this mutual and free agreement much more than by the 'Yes' uttered in the presence of the mayor.

"I say that, if they are both honorable persons, their union must be more intimate, more real, more wholesome, than if all the sacraments had consecrated it.

"This woman risks everything. And it is exactly because she knows it, because she gives everything, her heart, her body, her soul, her honor, her life, because she has foreseen all miseries, all dangers, all catastrophes, because she dares to do a bold act, an intrepid act, because she is prepared, determined to brave everything—her husband, who might kill her, and society, which may cast her out. This is why she is worthy of respect in the midst of her conjugal infidelity; this is why her lover, in taking her, should also foresee everything, and prefer her to every one else whatever may happen. I have nothing more to say. I spoke in the beginning like a sensible man whose duty it was to warn

you; and now I am only a man—a man who loves you. Command, and I obey."

Radiant, she closed his mouth with a kiss, and said in a low tone:

"It is not true, darling! There is nothing the matter! My husband does not suspect anything. But I wanted to see, I wanted to know, what you would do. I wished for a New Year's gift—the gift of your heart—another gift besides the necklace you sent me. You have given it to me. Thanks! thanks! God be thanked for the happiness you have given me!"

FRIEND PATIENCE

"WHAT became of Leremy?"

"He is captain in the Sixth Dragoons."

"And Pinson?"

"He's a subprefect."

"And Racollet?"

"Dead."

We were searching for other names which would remind us of the youthful faces of our younger days. Once in a while we had met some of these old comrades, bearded, bald, married, fathers of several children, and the realization of these changes had given us an unpleasant shudder, reminding us how short life is, how everything passes away, how everything changes. My friend asked me:

"And Patience, fat Patience?"

I almost howled:

"Oh! as for him, just listen to this. Four or five years ago I was in Limoges, on a tour of inspection, and I was waiting for dinner time. I was seated before the big café in the Place du Théâtre, just bored to death. The tradespeople were coming by twos, threes or fours, to take their absinthe or vermouth, talking all the time of their own or other people's business, laughing loudly, or lowering their voices in order to impart some important or delicate piece of news.

"I was saying to myself: 'What shall I do after dinner?' And I thought of the long evening in this provincial town, of the slow, dreary walk through unknown streets, of the impression of deadly gloom which these provincial people produce on the lonely traveller, and of the whole oppressive atmosphere of the place.

"I was thinking of all these things as I watched the little jets of gas flare up, feeling my loneliness increase with the falling shadows.

"A big, fat man sat down at the next table and called in a stentorian voice:

"'Waiter, my bitters!'

"The *'my'* came out like the report of a cannon. I immediately understood that everything was *his* in life, and not another's; that he had his nature, by Jove, his appetite, his trousers, *his* everything, his, more absolutely and more completely than anyone else's. Then he looked round him with a satisfied air. His bitters were brought, and he ordered:

"'My newspaper!'

"I wondered: 'Which newspaper can his be?' The title would certainly reveal to me his opinions, his theories, his principles, his hobbies, his weaknesses.

"The waiter brought the *Temps*. I was surprised. Why the *Temps*, a serious, sombre, doctrinaire, impartial sheet? I thought:

"'He must be a serious man with settled and regular habits; in short, a good bourgeois.'

"He put on his gold-rimmed spectacles, leaned back before beginning to read, and once more glanced about him. He noticed me, and immediately began to stare at me in an annoying manner. I was

even going to ask the reason for this attention, when he exclaimed from his seat:

"'Well, by all that's holy, if this isn't Gontran Lardois.'

"I answered:

"'Yes, monsieur, you are not mistaken.'

"Then he quickly rose and came toward me with hands outstretched:

"'Well, old man, how are you?'

"As I did not recognize him at all I was greatly embarrassed. I stammered:

"'Why—very well—and—you?'

"He began to laugh:

"'I bet you don't recognize me.'

"'No, not exactly. It seems—however——'

"He slapped me on the back:

"'Come on, no joking! I am Patience, Robert Patience, your friend, your chum.'

"I recognized him. Yes, Robert Patience, my old college chum. It was he. I took his outstretched hand:

"'And how are you?'

"'Fine!'

"His smile was like a pæan of victory.

"He asked:

"'What are you doing here?'

"I explained that I was government inspector of taxes.

"He continued, pointing to my red ribbon:

"'Then you have been a success?'

"I answered:

"'Fairly so. And you?'

"'I am doing well!'

"'What are you doing?'

"'I'm in business.'

"'Making money?'

"'Heaps. I'm very rich. But come around to lunch, to-morrow noon, 17 Rue du Coq-qui-Chante; you will see my place.'

"He seemed to hesitate a second, then continued:

"'Are you still the good sport that you used to be?'

"'I—I hope so.'

"'Not married?'

"'No.'

"'Good. And do you still love a good time and potatoes?'

"I was beginning to find him hopelessly vulgar. Nevertheless, I answered:

"'Yes.'

"'And pretty girls?'

"'Most assuredly.'

"He began to laugh good-humoredly.

"'Good, good! Do you remember our first escapade, in Bordeaux, after that dinner at Routie's? What a spree!'

"I did, indeed, remember that spree; and the recollection of it cheered me up. This called to mind other pranks. He would say:

"'Say, do you remember the time when we locked the proctor up in old man Latoque's cellar?'

"And he laughed and banged the table with his fist, and then he continued:

"'Yes—yes—yes—and do you remember the face of the geography teacher, M. Marin, the day we set off a firecracker in the globe, just as he was haranguing about the principal volcanoes of the earth?'

"Then suddenly I asked him:

"'And you, are you married?'

"He exclaimed:

"'Ten years, my boy, and I have four children, remarkable youngsters; but you'll see them and their mother.'

"We were talking rather loud; the people around us looked at us in surprise.

"Suddenly my friend looked at his watch, a chronometer the size of a pumpkin, and he cried:

"'Thunder! I'm sorry, but I'll have to leave you; I am never free at night.'

"He rose, took both my hands, shook them as though he were trying to wrench my arms from their sockets, and exclaimed:

"'So long, then; till to-morrow noon!'

"'So long!'

"I spent the morning working in the office of the collector-general of the Department. The chief wished me to stay to luncheon, but I told him that I had an engagement with a friend. As he had to go out, he accompanied me.

"I asked him:

"'Can you tell me how I can find the Rue du Coq-qui-Chante?'

"He answered:

"'Yes, it's only five minutes' walk from here. As I have nothing special to do, I will take you there.'

"We started out and soon found ourselves there. It was a wide, fine-looking street, on the outskirts of the town. I looked at the houses and I noticed No. 17. It was a large house with a garden behind it. The façade, decorated with frescoes, in the Italian

style, appeared to me as being in bad taste. There were goddesses holding vases, others swathed in clouds. Two stone cupids supported the number of the house.

"I said to the treasurer:

"'Here is where I am going.'

"I held my hand out to him. He made a quick, strange gesture, said nothing and shook my hand.

"I rang. A maid appeared. I asked:

"'Monsieur Patience, if you please?'

"She answered:

"'Right here, sir. Is it to monsieur that you wish to speak?'

"'Yes.'

"The hall was decorated with paintings from the brush of some local artist. Pauls and Virginias were kissing each other under palm trees bathed in a pink light. A hideous Oriental lantern was hanging from the ceiling. Several doors were concealed by bright hangings.

"But what struck me especially was the odor. It was a sickening and perfumed odor, reminding one of rice powder and the mouldy smell of a cellar. An indefinable odor in a heavy atmosphere as oppressive as that of public baths. I followed the maid up a marble stairway, covered with a green, Oriental carpet, and was ushered into a sumptuous parlor.

"Left alone, I looked about me.

"The room was richly furnished, but in the pretentious taste of a parvenu. Rather fine engravings of the last century represented women with powdered hair dressed high surprised by gentlemen in interesting positions. Another lady, lying in a large bed, was teasing with her foot a little dog, lost in

the sheets. One drawing showed four feet, bodies concealed behind a curtain. The large room, surrounded by soft couches, was entirely impregnated with that enervating and insipid odor which I had already noticed. There seemed to be something suspicious about the walls, the hangings, the exaggerated luxury, everything.

"I approached the window to look into the garden. It was very big, shady, beautiful. A wide path wound round a grass plot in the midst of which was a fountain, entered a shrubbery and came out farther away. And, suddenly, yonder, in the distance, between two clumps of bushes, three women appeared. They were walking slowly, arm in arm, clad in long, white tea-gowns covered with lace. Two were blondes and the other was dark-haired. Almost immediately they disappeared again behind the trees. I stood there entranced, delighted with this short and charming apparition, which brought to my mind a whole world of poetry. They had scarcely allowed themselves to be seen, in just the proper light, in that frame of foliage, in the midst of that mysterious, delightful park. It seemed to me that I had suddenly seen before me the great ladies of the last century, who were depicted in the engravings on the wall. And I began to think of the happy, joyous, witty and amorous times when manners were so graceful and lips so approachable.

"A deep voice made me jump. Patience had come in, beaming, and held out his hands to me.

"He looked into my eyes with the sly look which one takes when divulging secrets of love, and, with a Napoleonic gesture, he showed me his sumptuous

parlor, his park, the three women, who had reappeared in the back of it, then, in a triumphant voice, where the note of pride was prominent, he said:

"'And to think that I began with nothing—my wife and my sister-in-law!'"

ABANDONED

"I REALLY think you must be mad, my dear, to go for a country walk in such weather as this. You have had some very strange notions for the last two months. You drag me to the seaside in spite of myself, when you have never once had such a whim during all the forty-four years that we have been married. You chose Fécamp, which is a very dull town, without consulting me in the matter, and now you are seized with such a rage for walking, you who hardly ever stir out on foot, that you want to take a country walk on the hottest day of the year. Ask d'Apreval to go with you, as he is ready to gratify all your whims. As for me, I am going back to have a nap."

Madame de Cadour turned to her old friend and said:

"Will you come with me, Monsieur d'Apreval?"

He bowed with a smile, and with all the gallantry of former years:

"I will go wherever you go," he replied.

"Very well, then, go and get a sunstroke," Monsieur de Cadour said; and he went back to the Hôtel des Bains to lie down for an hour or two.

As soon as they were alone, the old lady and her old companion set off, and she said to him in a low voice, squeezing his hand:

"At last! at last!"

"You are mad," he said in a whisper. "I assure you that you are mad. Think of the risk you are running. If that man——"

She started.

"Oh! Henri, do not say *that man,* when you are speaking of him."

"Very well," he said abruptly, "if our son guesses anything, if he has any suspicions, he will have you, he will have us both in his power. You have got on without seeing him for the last forty years. What is the matter with you to-day?"

They had been going up the long street that leads from the sea to the town, and now they turned to the right, to go to Étretat. The white road stretched in front of him, then under a blaze of brilliant sunshine, so they went on slowly in the burning heat. She had taken her old friend's arm, and was looking straight in front of her, with a fixed and haunted gaze, and at last she said:

"And so you have not seen him again, either?"

"No, never."

"Is it possible?"

"My dear friend, do not let us begin that discussion again. I have a wife and children and you have a husband, so we both of us have much to fear from other people's opinion."

She did not reply; she was thinking of her long past youth and of many sad things that had occurred. How well she recalled all the details of their early friendship, his smiles, the way he used to linger, in order to watch her until she was indoors. What happy days they were, the only really delicious days she had ever enjoyed, and how quickly they were over!

And then—her discovery—of the penalty she paid! What anguish!

Of that journey to the South, that long journey, her sufferings, her constant terror, that secluded life in the small, solitary house on the shores of the Mediterranean, at the bottom of a garden, which she did not venture to leave. How well she remembered those long days which she spent lying under an orange tree, looking up at the round, red fruit, amid the green leaves. How she used to long to go out, as far as the sea, whose fresh breezes came to her over the wall, and whose small waves she could hear lapping on the beach. She dreamed of its immense blue expanse sparkling under the sun, with the white sails of the small vessels, and a mountain on the horizon. But she did not dare to go outside the gate. Suppose anybody had recognized her!

And those days of waiting, those last days of misery and expectation! The impending suffering, and then that terrible night! What misery she had endured, and what a night it was! How she had groaned and screamed! She could still see the pale face of her lover, who kissed her hand every moment, and the clean-shaven face of the doctor and the nurse's white cap.

And what she felt when she heard the child's feeble cries, that wail, that first effort of a human's voice!

And the next day! the next day! the only day of her life on which she had seen and kissed her son; for, from that time, she had never even caught a glimpse of him.

And what a long, void existence hers had been since then, with the thought of that child always,

always floating before her. She had never seen her son, that little creature that had been part of herself, even once since then; they had taken him from her, carried him away, and had hidden him. All she knew was that he had been brought up by some peasants in Normandy, that he had become a peasant himself, had married well, and that his father, whose name he did not know, had settled a handsome sum of money on him.

How often during the last forty years had she wished to go and see him and to embrace him! She could not imagine to herself that he had grown! She always thought of that small human atom which she had held in her arms and pressed to her bosom for a day.

How often she had said to M. d'Apreval: "I cannot bear it any longer; I must go and see him."

But he had always stopped her and kept her from going. She would be unable to restrain and to master herself; their son would guess it and take advantage of her, blackmail her; she would be lost.

"What is he like?" she said.

"I do not know. I have not seen him again, either."

"Is it possible? To have a son and not to know him; to be afraid of him and to reject him as if he were a disgrace! It is horrible."

They went along the dusty road, overcome by the scorching sun, and continually ascending that interminable hill.

"One might take it for a punishment," she continued; "I have never had another child, and I could no longer resist the longing to see him, which

has possessed me for forty years. You men cannot understand that. You must remember that I shall not live much longer, and suppose I should never see him, never have seen him! . . . Is it possible? How could I wait so long? I have thought about him every day since, and what a terrible existence mine has been! I have never awakened, never, do you understand, without my first thoughts being of him, of my child. How is he? Oh, how guilty I feel toward him! Ought one to fear what the world may say in a case like this? I ought to have left everything to go after him, to bring him up and to show my love for him. I should certainly have been much happier, but I did not dare, I was a coward. How I have suffered! Oh, how those poor, abandoned children must hate their mothers!"

She stopped suddenly, for she was choked by her sobs. The whole valley was deserted and silent in the dazzling light and the overwhelming heat, and only the grasshoppers uttered their shrill, continuous chirp among the sparse yellow grass on both sides of the road.

"Sit down a little," he said.

She allowed herself to be led to the side of the ditch and sank down with her face in her hands. Her white hair, which hung in curls on both sides of her face, had become tangled. She wept, overcome by profound grief, while he stood facing her, uneasy and not knowing what to say, and he merely murmured: "Come, take courage."

She got up.

"I will," she said, and wiping her eyes, she began to walk again with the uncertain step of an elderly woman.

A little farther on the road passed beneath a clump of trees, which hid a few houses, and they could distinguish the vibrating and regular blows of a blacksmith's hammer on the anvil; and presently they saw a wagon standing on the right side of the road in front of a low cottage, and two men shoeing a horse under a shed.

Monsieur d'Apreval went up to them.

"Where is Pierre Benedict's farm?" he asked.

"Take the road to the left, close to the inn, and then go straight on; it is the third house past Poret's. There is a small spruce fir close to the gate; you cannot make a mistake."

They turned to the left. She was walking very slowly now, her legs threatened to give way, and her heart was beating so violently that she felt as if she should suffocate, while at every step she murmured, as if in prayer:

"Oh! Heaven! Heaven!"

Monsieur d'Apreval, who was also nervous and rather pale, said to her somewhat gruffly:

"If you cannot manage to control your feelings, you will betray yourself at once. Do try and restrain yourself."

"How can I?" she replied. "My child! When I think that I am going to see my child."

They were going along one of those narrow country lanes between farmyards, that are concealed beneath a double row of beech trees at either side of the ditches, and suddenly they found themselves in front of a gate, beside which there was a young spruce fir.

"This is it," he said.

She stopped suddenly and looked about her. The

courtyard, which was planted with apple trees, was large and extended as far as the small thatched dwelling house. On the opposite side were the stable, the barn, the cow house and the poultry house, while the gig, the wagon and the manure cart were under a slated outhouse. Four calves were grazing under the shade of the trees and black hens were wandering all about the enclosure.

All was perfectly still; the house door was open, but nobody was to be seen, and so they went in, when immediately a large black dog came out of a barrel that was standing under a pear tree, and began to bark furiously.

There were four bee-hives on boards against the wall of the house.

Monsieur d'Apreval stood outside and called out:

"Is anybody at home?"

Then a child appeared, a little girl of about ten, dressed in a chemise and a linen petticoat, with dirty, bare legs and a timid and cunning look. She remained standing in the doorway, as if to prevent any one going in.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is your father in?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"And your mother?"

"Gone after the cows."

"Will she be back soon?"

"I don't know."

Then suddenly the lady, as if she feared that her companion might force her to return, said quickly:

"I shall not go without having seen him."

"We will wait for him, my dear friend."

As they turned away, they saw a peasant woman coming toward the house, carrying two tin pails, which appeared to be heavy and which glistened brightly in the sunlight.

She limped with her right leg, and in her brown knitted jacket, that was faded by the sun and washed out by the rain, she looked like a poor, wretched, dirty servant.

"Here is mamma," the child said.

When she got close to the house, she looked at the strangers angrily and suspiciously, and then she went in, as if she had not seen them. She looked old and had a hard, yellow, wrinkled face, one of those wooden faces that country people so often have.

Monsieur d'Apreval called her back.

"I beg your pardon, madame, but we came in to know whether you could sell us two glasses of milk."

She was grumbling when she reappeared in the door, after putting down her pails.

"I don't sell milk," she replied.

"We are very thirsty," he said, "and madame is very tired. Can we not get something to drink?"

The peasant woman gave them an uneasy and cunning glance and then she made up her mind.

"As you are here, I will give you some," she said, going into the house, and almost immediately the child came out and brought two chairs, which she placed under an apple tree, and then the mother, in turn, brought out two bowls of foaming milk, which she gave to the visitors. She did not return to the house, however, but remained standing near them,

as if to watch them and to find out for what purpose they had come there.

"You have come from Fécamp?" she said.

"Yes," Monsieur d'Apreval replied, "we are staying at Fécamp for the summer."

And then, after a short silence, he continued:

"Have you any fowls you could sell us every week?"

The woman hesitated for a moment and then replied:

"Yes, I think I have. I suppose you want young ones?"

"Yes, of course."

"What do you pay for them in the market?"

D'Apreval, who had not the least idea, turned to his companion:

"What are you paying for poultry in Fécamp, my dear lady?"

"Four francs and four francs fifty centimes," she said, her eyes full of tears, while the farmer's wife, who was looking at her askance, asked in much surprise:

"Is the lady ill, as she is crying?"

He did not know what to say, and replied with some hesitation:

"No—no—but she lost her watch as we came along, a very handsome watch, and that troubles her. If anybody should find it, please let us know."

Mother Benedict did not reply, as she thought it a very equivocal sort of answer, but suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh, here is my husband!"

She was the only one who had seen him, as she was facing the gate. D'Apreval started and Madame

de Cadour nearly fell as she turned round suddenly on her chair.

A man bent nearly double, and out of breath, stood there, ten yards from them, dragging a cow at the end of a rope. Without taking any notice of the visitors, he said:

"Confound it! What a brute!"

And he went past them and disappeared in the cow house.

Her tears had dried quickly as she sat there startled, without a word and with the one thought in her mind, that this was her son, and D'Apreval, whom the same thought had struck very unpleasantly, said in an agitated voice:

"Is this Monsieur Benedict?"

"Who told you his name?" the wife asked, still rather suspiciously.

"The blacksmith at the corner of the highroad," he replied, and then they were all silent, with their eyes fixed on the door of the cow house, which formed a sort of black hole in the wall of the building. Nothing could be seen inside, but they heard a vague noise, movements and footsteps and the sound of hoofs, which were deadened by the straw on the floor, and soon the man reappeared in the door, wiping his forehead, and came toward the house with long, slow strides. He passed the strangers without seeming to notice them and said to his wife:

"Go and draw me a jug of cider; I am very thirsty."

Then he went back into the house, while his wife went into the cellar and left the two Parisians alone.

"Let us go, let us go, Henri," Madame de Cadour said, nearly distracted with grief, and so d'Apreval

took her by the arm, helped her to rise, and sustaining her with all his strength, for he felt that she was nearly fainting, he led her out, after throwing five francs on one of the chairs.

As soon as they were outside the gate, she began to sob and said, shaking with grief:

"Oh! oh! is that what you have made of him?"

He was very pale and replied coldly:

"I did what I could. His farm is worth eighty thousand francs, and that is more than most of the sons of the middle classes have."

They returned slowly, without speaking a word. She was still crying; the tears ran down her cheeks continually for a time, but by degrees they stopped, and they went back to Fécamp, where they found Monsieur de Cadour waiting dinner for them. As soon as he saw them, he began to laugh and exclaimed:

"So my wife has had a sunstroke, and I am very glad of it. I really think she has lost her head for some time past!"

Neither of them replied, and when the husband asked them, rubbing his hands:

"Well, I hope that, at least, you have had a pleasant walk?"

Monsieur d'Apreval replied:

"A delightful walk, I assure you; perfectly delightful."

THE MAISON TELLIER

THEY went there every evening about eleven o'clock, just as they would go to the club. Six or eight of them; always the same set, not fast men, but respectable tradesmen, and young men in government or some other employ, and they would drink their Chartreuse, and laugh with the girls, or else talk seriously with Madame Tellier, whom everybody respected, and then they would go home at twelve o'clock! The younger men would sometimes stay later.

It was a small, comfortable house painted yellow, at the corner of a street behind Saint Étienne's Church, and from the windows one could see the docks full of ships being unloaded, the big salt marsh, and, rising beyond it, the Virgin's Hill with its old gray chapel.

Madame Tellier, who came of a respectable family of peasant proprietors in the Department of the Eure, had taken up her profession, just as she would have become a milliner or dressmaker. The prejudice which is so violent and deeply rooted in large towns does not exist in the country places in Normandy. The peasant says:

"It is a paying business," and he sends his daughter to keep an establishment of this character just as he would send her to keep a girls' school.

She had inherited the house from an old uncle,

to whom it had belonged. Monsieur and Madame Tellier, who had formerly been innkeepers near Yvetot, had immediately sold their house, as they thought that the business at Fécamp was more profitable, and they arrived one fine morning to assume the direction of the enterprise, which was declining on account of the absence of the proprietors. They were good people enough in their way, and soon made themselves liked by their staff and their neighbors.

Monsieur died of apoplexy two years later, for as the new place kept him in idleness and without any exercise, he had grown excessively stout, and his health had suffered. Since she had been a widow, all the frequenters of the establishment made much of her; but people said that, personally, she was quite virtuous, and even the girls in the house could not discover anything against her. She was tall, stout and affable, and her complexion, which had become pale in the dimness of her house, the shutters of which were scarcely ever opened, shone as if it had been varnished. She had a fringe of curly false hair, which gave her a juvenile look, that contrasted strongly with the ripeness of her figure. She was always smiling and cheerful, and was fond of a joke, but there was a shade of reserve about her, which her occupation had not quite made her lose. Coarse words always shocked her, and when any young fellow who had been badly brought up called her establishment a hard name, she was angry and disgusted.

In a word, she had a refined mind, and although she treated her women as friends, yet she very

frequently used to say that "she and they were not made of the same stuff."

Sometimes during the week she would hire a carriage and take some of her girls into the country, where they used to enjoy themselves on the grass by the side of the little river. They were like a lot of girls let out from school, and would run races and play childish games. They had a cold dinner on the grass, and drank cider, and went home at night with a delicious feeling of fatigue, and in the carriage they kissed Madame Tellier as their kind mother, who was full of goodness and complaisance.

The house had two entrances. At the corner there was a sort of tap-room, which sailors and the lower orders frequented at night, and she had two girls whose special duty it was to wait on them with the assistance of Frederic, a short, light-haired, beardless fellow, as strong as a horse. They set the half bottles of wine and the jugs of beer on the shaky marble tables before the customers, and then urged the men to drink.

The three other girls—there were only five of them—formed a kind of aristocracy, and they remained with the company on the first floor, unless they were wanted downstairs and there was nobody on the first floor. The salon de Jupiter, where the tradesmen used to meet, was papered in blue, and embellished with a large drawing representing Leda and the swan. The room was reached by a winding staircase, through a narrow door opening on the street, and above this door a lantern inclosed in wire, such as one still sees in some towns, at the foot of the shrine of some saint, burned all night long.

The house, which was old and damp, smelled

slightly of mildew. At times there was an odor of eau de Cologne in the passages, or sometimes from a half-open door downstairs the noisy mirth of the common men sitting and drinking rose to the first floor, much to the disgust of the gentlemen who were there. Madame Tellier, who was on friendly terms with her customers, did not leave the room, and took much interest in what was going on in the town, and they regularly told her all the news. Her serious conversation was a change from the ceaseless chatter of the three women; it was a rest from the obscene jokes of those stout individuals who every evening indulged in the commonplace debauchery of drinking a glass of liqueur in company with common women.

The names of the girls on the first floor were Fernande, Raphaele, and Rosa, the Jade. As the staff was limited, madame had endeavored that each member of it should be a pattern, an epitome of the feminine type, so that every customer might find as nearly as possible the realization of his ideal. Fernande represented the handsome blonde; she was very tall, rather fat, and lazy; a country girl, who could not get rid of her freckles, and whose short, light, almost colorless, tow-like hair, like combed-out hemp, barely covered her head.

Raphaele, who came from Marseilles, played the indispensable part of the handsome Jewess, and was thin, with high cheekbones, which were covered with rouge, and black hair covered with pomatum, which curled on her forehead. Her eyes would have been handsome, if the right one had not had a speck in it. Her Roman nose came down over a square

jaw, where two false upper teeth contrasted strangely with the bad color of the rest.

Rosa was a little roll of fat, nearly all body, with very short legs, and from morning till night she sang songs, which were alternately risqué or sentimental, in a harsh voice; told silly, interminable tales, and only stopped talking in order to eat, and left off eating in order to talk; she was never still, and was active as a squirrel, in spite of her embonpoint and her short legs; her laugh, which was a torrent of shrill cries, resounded here and there, ceaselessly, in a bedroom, in the loft, in the café, everywhere, and all about nothing.

The two women on the ground floor, Louise, who was nicknamed La Cocotte, and Flora, whom they called Balançoise, because she limped a little, the former always dressed as the Goddess of Liberty, with a tri-colored sash, and the other as a Spanish woman, with a string of copper coins in her carroty hair, which jingled at every uneven step, looked like cooks dressed up for the carnival. They were like all other women of the lower orders, neither uglier nor better looking than they usually are.

They looked just like servants at an inn, and were generally called "the two pumps."

A jealous peace, which was, however, very rarely disturbed, reigned among these five women, thanks to Madame Tellier's conciliatory wisdom, and to her constant good humor, and the establishment, which was the only one of the kind in the little town, was very much frequented. Madame Tellier had succeeded in giving it such a respectable appearance, she was so amiable and obliging to everybody, her good

heart was so well known, that she was treated with a certain amount of consideration. The regular customers spent money on her, and were delighted when she was especially friendly toward them, and when they met during the day, they would say: "Until this evening, you know where," just as men say: "At the club, after dinner." In a word, Madame Tellier's house was somewhere to go to, and they very rarely missed their daily meetings there.

One evening toward the end of May, the first arrival, Monsieur Poulin, who was a timber merchant, and had been mayor, found the door shut. The lantern behind the grating was not alight; there was not a sound in the house; everything seemed dead. He knocked, gently at first, but then more loudly, but nobody answered the door. Then he went slowly up the street, and when he got to the market place he met Monsieur Duvert, the gunmaker, who was going to the same place, so they went back together, but did not meet with any better success. But suddenly they heard a loud noise, close to them, and on going round the house, they saw a number of English and French sailors, who were hammering at the closed shutters of the tap-room with their fists.

The two tradesmen immediately made their escape, but a low "Pst!" stopped them; it was Monsieur Tournevau, the fish curer, who had recognized them, and was trying to attract their attention. They told him what had happened, and he was all the more annoyed, as he was a married man and father of a family, and only went on Saturdays. That was his regular evening, and now he should be deprived of this dissipation for the whole week.

The three men went as far as the quay together, and on the way they met young Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, who frequented the place regularly, and Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector, and they all returned to the Rue aux Juifs together, to make a last attempt. But the exasperated sailors were besieging the house, throwing stones at the shutters, and shouting, and the five first-floor customers went away as quickly as possible, and walked aimlessly about the streets.

Presently they met Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and then Monsieur Vasse, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and they took a long walk, going to the pier first of all, where they sat down in a row on the granite parapet and watched the rising tide, and when the promenaders had sat there for some time, Monsieur Tournevau said:

"This is not very amusing!"

"Decidedly not," Monsieur Pinipesse replied, and they started off to walk again.

After going through the street alongside the hill, they returned over the wooden bridge which crosses the Retenue, passed close to the railway, and came out again on the market place, when, suddenly, a quarrel arose between Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector, and Monsieur Tournevau about an edible mushroom which one of them declared he had found in the neighborhood.

As they were out of temper already from having nothing to do, they would very probably have come to blows, if the others had not interfered. Monsieur Pinipesse went off furious, and soon another altercation arose between the ex-mayor, Monsieur Poulin, and Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, on

the subject of the tax collector's salary and the profits which he might make. Insulting remarks were freely passing between them, when a torrent of formidable cries was heard, and the body of sailors, who were tired of waiting so long outside a closed house, came into the square. They were walking arm in arm, two and two, and formed a long procession, and were shouting furiously. The townsmen hid themselves in a doorway, and the yelling crew disappeared in the direction of the abbey. For a long time they still heard the noise, which diminished like a storm in the distance, and then silence was restored. Monsieur Poulin and Monsieur Dupuis, who were angry with each other, went in different directions, without wishing each other good-by.

The other four set off again, and instinctively went in the direction of Madame Tellier's establishment, which was still closed, silent, impenetrable. A quiet, but obstinate drunken man was knocking at the door of the lower room, and then stopped and called Frederic, in a low voice, but finding that he got no answer, he sat down on the doorstep, and waited the course of events.

The others were just going to retire, when the noisy band of sailors reappeared at the end of the street. The French sailors were shouting the "Marseillaise," and the Englishmen "Rule Britannia." There was a general lurching against the wall, and then the drunken fellows went on their way toward the quay, where a fight broke out between the two nations, in the course of which an Englishman had his arm broken and a Frenchman his nose split.

The drunken man who had waited outside the

door, was crying by that time, as drunken men and children cry when they are vexed, and the others went away. By degrees, calm was restored in the noisy town; here and there, at moments, the distant sound of voices could be heard, and then died away in the distance.

One man only was still wandering about, Monsieur Tournevau, the fish curer, who was annoyed at having to wait until the following Saturday, and he hoped something would turn up, he did not know what; but he was exasperated at the police for thus allowing an establishment of such public utility, which they had under their control, to be closed.

He went back to it and examined the walls, trying to find out some reason, and on the shutter he saw a notice stuck up. He struck a wax match and read the following, in a large, uneven hand: "Closed on account of the Confirmation."

Then he went away, as he saw it was useless to remain, and left the drunken man lying on the pavement fast asleep, outside that inhospitable door.

The next day, all the regular customers, one after the other, found some reason for going through the street, with a bundle of papers under their arm to keep them in countenance, and with a furtive glance they all read that mysterious notice:

"Closed on account of the Confirmation."

PART II

Madame Tellier had a brother, who was a carpenter in their native place, Virville, in the Department of Eure. When she still kept the inn at Yvetot, she had stood godmother to that brother's daugh-

ter, who had received the name of Constance—Constance Rivet; she herself being a Rivet on her father's side. The carpenter, who knew that his sister was in a good position, did not lose sight of her, although they did not meet often, for they were both kept at home by their occupations, and lived a long way from each other. But as the girl was twelve years old, and going to be confirmed, he seized that opportunity to write to his sister, asking her to come and be present at the ceremony. Their old parents were dead, and as she could not well refuse her god-daughter, she accepted the invitation. Her brother, whose name was Joseph, hoped that by dint of showing his sister attention, she might be induced to make her will in the girl's favor, as she had no children of her own.

His sister's occupation did not trouble his scruples in the least, and, besides, nobody knew anything about it at Virville. When they spoke of her, they only said: "Madame Tellier is living at Fécamp," which might mean that she was living on her own private income. It was quite twenty leagues from Fécamp to Virville, and for a peasant, twenty leagues on land is as long a journey as crossing the ocean would be to city people. The people at Virville had never been further than Rouen, and nothing attracted the people from Fécamp to a village of five hundred houses in the middle of a plain, and situated in another department; at any rate, nothing was known about her business.

But the Confirmation was coming on, and Madame Tellier was in great embarrassment. She had no substitute, and did not at all care to leave her house, even for a day; for all the rivalries between the girls

upstairs and those downstairs would infallibly break out. No doubt Frederic would get drunk, and when he was in that state, he would knock anybody down for a mere word. At last, however, she made up her mind to take them all with her, with the exception of the man, to whom she gave a holiday until the next day but one.

When she asked her brother, he made no objection, but undertook to put them all up for a night, and so on Saturday morning the eight-o'clock express carried off Madame Tellier and her companions in a second-class carriage. As far as Beuzeville they were alone, and chattered like magpies, but at that station a couple got in. The man, an old peasant, dressed in a blue blouse with a turned-down collar, wide sleeves tight at the wrist, ornamented with white embroidery, wearing an old high hat with long nap, held an enormous green umbrella in one hand, and a large basket in the other, from which the heads of three frightened ducks protruded. The woman, who sat up stiffly in her rustic finery, had a face like a fowl, with a nose that was as pointed as a bill. She sat down opposite her husband and did not stir, as she was startled at finding herself in such smart company.

There was certainly an array of striking colors in the carriage. Madame Tellier was dressed in blue silk from head to foot, and had on a dazzling red imitation French cashmere shawl. Fernande was puffing in a Scotch plaid dress, of which her companions had laced the bodice as tight as they could, forcing up her full bust, that was continually heaving up and down. Raphaele, with a bonnet covered with feathers, so that it looked like a bird's nest,

had on a lilac dress with gold spots on it, and there was something Oriental about it that suited her Jewish face. Rosa had on a pink skirt with large flounces, and looked like a very fat child, an obese dwarf; while the two Pumps looked as if they had cut their dresses out of old flowered curtains dating from the Restoration.

As soon as they were no longer alone in the compartment, the ladies put on staid looks, and began to talk of subjects which might give others a high opinion of them. But at Bolbeck a gentleman with light whiskers, a gold chain, and wearing two or three rings, got in, and put several parcels wrapped in oilcloth on the rack over his head. He looked inclined for a joke, and seemed a good-hearted fellow.

"Are you ladies changing your quarters?" he said, and that question embarrassed them all considerably. Madame Tellier, however, quickly regained her composure, and said sharply, to avenge the honor of her corps:

"I think you might try and be polite!"

He excused himself, and said: "I beg your pardon, I ought to have said your nunnery."

She could not think of a retort, so, perhaps thinking she had said enough, madame gave him a dignified bow and compressed her lips.

Then the gentleman, who was sitting between Rosa and the old peasant, began to wink knowingly at the ducks whose heads were sticking out of the basket, and when he felt that he had fixed the attention of his public, he began to tickle them under the bills and spoke funnily to them to make the company smile.

"We have left our little pond, quack! quack! to

make the acquaintance of the little spit, qu-ack! qu-ack!"

The unfortunate creatures turned their necks away, to avoid his caresses, and made desperate efforts to get out of their wicker prison, and then, suddenly, all at once, uttered the most lamentable quacks of distress. The women exploded with laughter. They leaned forward and pushed each other, so as to see better; they were very much interested in the ducks, and the gentleman redoubled his airs, his wit and his teasing.

Rosa joined in, and leaning over her neighbor's legs, she kissed the three animals on the head, and immediately all the girls wanted to kiss them, in turn, and as they did so the gentleman took them on his knee, jumped them up and down and pinched their arms. The two peasants, who were even in greater consternation than their poultry, rolled their eyes as if they were possessed, without venturing to move, and their old wrinkled faces had not a smile, not a twitch.

Then the gentleman, who was a commercial traveller, offered the ladies suspenders by way of a joke, and taking up one of his packages, he opened it. It was a joke, for the parcel contained garters. There were blue silk, pink silk, red silk, violet silk, mauve silk garters, and the buckles were made of two gilt metal cupids embracing each other. The girls uttered exclamations of delight and looked at them with that gravity natural to all women when they are considering an article of dress. They consulted one another by their looks or in a whisper, and replied in the same manner, and Madame Tellier was longingly handling a pair of orange garters that were

broader and more imposing looking than the rest; really fit for the mistress of such an establishment.

The gentleman waited, for he had an idea.

"Come, my kittens," he said, "you must try them on."

There was a torrent of exclamations, and they squeezed their petticoats between their legs, but he quietly waited his time and said: "Well, if you will not try them on I shall pack them up again."

And he added cunningly: "I offer any pair they like to those who will try them on."

But they would not, and sat up very straight and looked dignified.

But the two Pumps looked so distressed that he renewed his offer to them, and Flora, especially, visibly hesistated, and he insisted: "Come, my dear, a little courage! Just look at that lilac pair; it will suit your dress admirably."

That decided her, and pulling up her dress she showed a thick leg fit for a milkmaid, in a badly fitting, coarse stocking. The commercial traveller stooped down and fastened the garter. When he had done this, he gave her the lilac pair and asked: "Who next?"

"I! I!" they all shouted at once, and he began on Rosa, who uncovered a shapeless, round thing without any ankle, a regular "sausage of a leg," as Raphaele used to say.

Lastly, Madame Tellier herself put out her leg, a handsome, muscular Norman leg, and in his surprise and pleasure, the commercial traveller gallantly took off his hat to salute that master calf, like a true French cavalier.

The two peasants, who were speechless from sur-

prise, glanced sideways out of the corner of one eye, and they looked so exactly like fowls that the man with the light whiskers, when he sat up, said: "Co—co—ri—co" under their very noses, and that gave rise to another storm of amusement.

The old people got out at Motteville with their basket, their ducks and their umbrella, and they heard the woman say to her husband as they went away:

"They are no good and are off to that cursed place, Paris."

The funny commercial traveller himself got out at Rouen, after behaving so coarsely that Madame Tellier was obliged sharply to put him in his right place, and she added, as a moral: "This will teach us not to talk to the first comer."

At Oissel they changed trains, and at a little station further on Monsieur Joseph Rivet was waiting for them with a large cart with a number of chairs in it, drawn by a white horse.

The carpenter politely kissed all the ladies and then helped them into his conveyance.

Three of them sat on three chairs at the back, Raphaele, Madame Tellier and her brother on the three chairs in front, while Rosa, who had no seat, settled herself as comfortably as she could on tall Fernande's knees, and then they set off.

But the horse's jerky trot shook the cart so terribly that the chairs began to dance and threw the travellers about, to the right and to the left, as if they were dancing puppets, which made them scream and make horrible grimaces.

They clung on to the sides of the vehicle, their bonnets fell on their backs, over their faces and on

their shoulders, and the white horse went on stretching out his head and holding out his little hairless tail like a rat's, with which he whisked his buttocks from time to time.

Joseph Rivet, with one leg on the shafts and the other doubled under him, held the reins with his elbows very high, and kept uttering a kind of clucking sound, which made the horse prick up its ears and go faster.

The green country extended on either side of the road, and here and there the colza in flower presented a waving expanse of yellow, from which arose a strong, wholesome, sweet and penetrating odor, which the wind carried to some distance.

The cornflowers showed their little blue heads amid the rye, and the women wanted to pick them, but Monsieur Rivet refused to stop.

Then, sometimes, a whole field appeared to be covered with blood, so thick were the poppies, and the cart, which looked as if it were filled with flowers of more brilliant hue, jogged on through fields bright with wild flowers, and disappeared behind the trees of a farm, only to reappear and to go on again through the yellow or green standing crops, which were studded with red or blue.

One o'clock struck as they drove up to the carpenter's door. They were tired out and pale with hunger, as they had eaten nothing since they left home. Madame Rivet ran out and made them alight, one after another, and kissed them as soon as they were on the ground, and she seemed as if she would never tire of kissing her sister-in-law, whom she apparently wanted to monopolize. They had lunch

in the workshop, which had been cleared out for the next day's dinner.

The capital omelet, followed by boiled chitterlings and washed down with good hard cider, made them all feel comfortable.

Rivet had taken a glass so that he might drink with them, and his wife cooked, waited on them, brought in the dishes, took them out and asked each of them in a whisper whether they had everything they wanted. A number of boards standing against the walls and heaps of shavings that had been swept into the corners gave out a smell of planed wood, a smell of a carpenter's shop, that resinous odor which penetrates to the lungs.

They wanted to see the little girl, but she had gone to church and would not be back again until evening, so they all went out for a stroll in the country.

It was a small village, through which the high-road passed. Ten or a dozen houses on either side of the single street were inhabited by the butcher, the grocer, the carpenter, the innkeeper, the shoemaker and the baker.

The church was at the end of the street and was surrounded by a small churchyard, and four immense lime-trees, which stood just outside the porch, shaded it completely. It was built of flint, in no particular style, and had a slate-roofed steeple. When you got past it, you were again in the open country, which was varied here and there by clumps of trees which hid the homesteads.

Rivet had given his arm to his sister, out of politeness, although he was in his working clothes, and was walking with her in a dignified manner. His

wife, who was overwhelmed by Raphaele's gold-striped dress, walked between her and Fernande, and roly-poly Rosa was trotting behind with Louise and Flora, the Seesaw, who was limping along, quite tired out.

The inhabitants came to their doors, the children left off playing, and a window curtain would be raised, so as to show a muslin cap, while an old woman with a crutch, who was almost blind, crossed herself as if it were a religious procession, and they all gazed for a long time at those handsome ladies from town, who had come so far to be present at the confirmation of Joseph Rivet's little girl, and the carpenter rose very much in the public estimation.

As they passed the church they heard some children singing. Little shrill voices were singing a hymn, but Madame Tellier would not let them go in, for fear of disturbing the little cherubs.

After the walk, during which Joseph Rivet enumerated the principal landed proprietors, spoke about the yield of the land and the productiveness of the cows and sheep, he took his tribe of women home and installed them in his house, and as it was very small, they had to put them into the rooms, two and two.

Just for once Rivet would sleep in the workshop on the shavings; his wife was to share her bed with her sister-in-law, and Fernande and Raphaele were to sleep together in the next room. Louise and Flora were put into the kitchen, where they had a mattress on the floor, and Rosa had a little dark cupboard to herself at the top of the stairs, close to the loft, where the candidate for confirmation was to sleep.

When the little girl came in she was overwhelmed with kisses; all the women wished to caress her with that need of tender expansion, that habit of professional affection which had made them kiss the ducks in the railway carriage.

They each of them took her on their knees, stroked her soft, light hair and pressed her in their arms with vehement and spontaneous outbursts of affection, and the child, who was very good and religious, bore it all patiently.

As the day had been a fatiguing one for everybody, they all went to bed soon after dinner. The whole village was wrapped in that perfect stillness of the country, which is almost like a religious silence, and the girls, who were accustomed to the noisy evenings of their establishment, felt rather impressed by the perfect repose of the sleeping village, and they shivered, not with cold, but with those little shivers of loneliness which come over uneasy and troubled hearts.

As soon as they were in bed, two and two together, they clasped each other in their arms, as if to protect themselves against this feeling of the calm and profound slumber of the earth. But Rosa, who was alone in her little dark cupboard, felt a vague and painful emotion come over her.

She was tossing about in bed, unable to get to sleep, when she heard the faint sobs of a crying child close to her head, through the partition. She was frightened, and called out, and was answered by a weak voice, broken by sobs. It was the little girl, who was always used to sleeping in her mother's room, and who was afraid in her small attic.

Rosa was delighted, got up softly so as not to

awaken any one, and went and fetched the child. She took her into her warm bed, kissed her and pressed her to her bosom, lavished exaggerated manifestations of tenderness on her, and at last grew calmer herself and went to sleep. And till morning the candidate for confirmation slept with her head on Rosa's bosom.

At five o'clock the little church bell, ringing the Angelus, woke the women, who usually slept the whole morning long.

The villagers were up already, and the women went busily from house to house, carefully bringing short, starched muslin dresses or very long wax tapers tied in the middle with a bow of silk fringed with gold, and with dents in the wax for the fingers.

The sun was already high in the blue sky, which still had a rosy tint toward the horizon, like a faint remaining trace of dawn. Families of fowls were walking about outside the houses, and here and there a black cock, with a glistening breast, raised his head, which was crowned by his red comb, flapped his wings and uttered his shrill crow, which the other cocks repeated.

Vehicles of all sorts came from neighboring parishes, stopping at the different houses, and tall Norman women dismounted, wearing dark dresses, with kerchiefs crossed over the bosom, fastened with silver brooches a hundred years old.

The men had put on their blue smocks over their new frock-coats or over their old dress-coats of green cloth, the two tails of which hung down below their blouses. When the horses were in the stable there was a double line of rustic conveyances along the road: carts, cabriolets, tilburies, wagonettes,

traps of every shape and age, tipping forward on their shafts or else tipping backward with the shafts up in the air.

The carpenter's house was as busy as a bee-hive. The women, in dressing-jackets and petticoats, with their thin, short hair, which looked faded and worn, hanging down their backs, were busy dressing the child, who was standing quietly on a table, while Madame Tellier was directing the movements of her battalion. They washed her, did her hair, dressed her, and with the help of a number of pins, they arranged the folds of her dress and took in the waist, which was too large.

Then, when she was ready, she was told to sit down and not to move, and the women hurried off to get ready themselves.

The church bell began to ring again, and its tinkle was lost in the air, like a feeble voice which is soon drowned in space. The candidates came out of the houses and went toward the parochial building, which contained the two schools and the mansion house, and which stood quite at one end of the village, while the church was situated at the other.

The parents, in their very best clothes, followed their children, with embarrassed looks, and those clumsy movements of a body bent by toil.

The little girls disappeared in a cloud of muslin, which looked like whipped cream, while the lads, who looked like embryo waiters in a café and whose heads shone with pomatum, walked with their legs apart, so as not to get any dust or dirt on their black trousers.

It was something for a family to be proud of, when a large number of relatives, who had come

from a distance, surrounded the child, and the carpenter's triumph was complete.

Madame Tellier's regiment, with its leader at its head, followed Constance; her father gave his arm to his sister, her mother walked by the side of Raphaele, Fernande with Rosa and Louise and Flora together, and thus they proceeded majestically through the village, like a general's staff in full uniform, while the effect on the village was startling.

At the school the girls ranged themselves under the Sister of Mercy and the boys under the schoolmaster, and they started off, singing a hymn as they went. The boys led the way, in two files, between the two rows of vehicles, from which the horses had been taken out, and the girls followed in the same order; and as all the people in the village had given the town ladies the precedence out of politeness, they came immediately behind the girls, and lengthened the double line of the procession still more, three on the right and three on the left, while their dresses were as striking as a display of fireworks.

When they went into the church the congregation grew quite excited. They pressed against each other, turned round and jostled one another in order to see, and some of the devout ones spoke almost aloud, for they were so astonished at the sight of those ladies whose dresses were more elaborate than the priest's vestments.

The mayor offered them his pew, the first one on the right, close to the choir, and Madame Tellier sat there with her sister-in-law, Fernande and Raphaele. Rosa, Louise and Flora occupied the second seat, in company with the carpenter.

The choir was full of kneeling children, the girls

on one side and the boys on the other, and the long wax tapers which they held looked like lances pointing in all directions, and three men were standing in front of the lectern, singing as loud as they could.

They prolonged the syllables of the sonorous Latin indefinitely, holding on to "Amens" with interminable "a—a's," which the reed stop of the organ sustained in a monotonous, long-drawn-out tone.

A child's shrill voice took up the reply, and from time to time a priest sitting in a stall and wearing a biretta got up, muttered something and sat down again, while the three singers continued, their eyes fixed on the big book of plain chant lying open before them on the outstretched wings of a wooden eagle.

Then silence ensued and the service went on. Toward the close Rosa, with her head in both hands suddenly thought of her mother, her village church and her first communion. She almost fancied that that day had returned, when she was so small and was almost hidden in her white dress, and she began to cry.

First of all she wept silently, and the tears dropped slowly from her eyes, but her emotion increased with her recollections, and she began to sob. She took out her pocket handkerchief, wiped her eyes and held it to her mouth, so as not to scream, but it was in vain. A sort of rattle escaped her throat, and she was answered by two other profound, heartbreaking sobs, for her two neighbors, Louise and Flora, who were kneeling near her, overcome by similar recollections, were sobbing by her side, amid a flood of tears; and as tears are contagious, Madame Tellier soon in turn found that her eyes were wet,

and on turning to her sister-in-law, she saw that all the occupants of her seat were also crying.

Soon, throughout the church, here and there, a wife, a mother, a sister, seized by the strange sympathy of poignant emotion, and affected at the sight of those handsome ladies on their knees, shaken with sobs, was moistening her cambric pocket handkerchief and pressing her beating heart with her left hand.

Just as the sparks from an engine will set fire to dry grass, so the tears of Rosa and of her companions infected the whole congregation in a moment. Men, women, old men and lads in new smocks were soon all sobbing, and something superhuman seemed to be hovering over their heads—a spirit, the powerful breath of an invisible and all-powerful Being.

Suddenly a species of madness seemed to pervade the church, the noise of a crowd in a state of frenzy, a tempest of sobs and stifled cries. It came like gusts of wind which blow the trees in a forest, and the priest, paralyzed by emotion, stammered out incoherent prayers, without finding words, ardent prayers of the soul soaring to heaven.

The people behind him gradually grew calmer. The cantors, in all the dignity of their white surplices, went on in somewhat uncertain voices, and the reed stop itself seemed hoarse, as if the instrument had been weeping; the priest, however, raised his hand to command silence and went and stood on the chancel steps, when everybody was silent at once.

After a few remarks on what had just taken place, and which he attributed to a miracle, he continued, turning to the seats where the carpenter's guests were sitting:

"I especially thank you, my dear sisters, who have come from such a distance, and whose presence among us, whose evident faith and ardent piety have set such a salutary example to all. You have edified my parish; your emotion has warmed all hearts; without you, this great day would not, perhaps, have had this really divine character. It is sufficient, at times, that there should be one chosen lamb, for the Lord to descend on His flock."

His voice failed him again, from emotion, and he said no more, but concluded the service.

They now left the church as quickly as possible; the children themselves were restless and tired with such a prolonged tension of the mind. The parents left the church by degrees to see about dinner.

There was a crowd outside, a noisy crowd, a babel of loud voices, where the shrill Norman accent was discernible. The villagers formed two ranks, and when the children appeared, each family took possession of their own.

The whole houseful of women caught hold of Constance, surrounded her and kissed her, and Rosa was especially demonstrative. At last she took hold of one hand, while Madame Tellier took the other, and Raphaele and Fernande held up her long muslin skirt, so that it might not drag in the dust; Louise and Flora brought up the rear with Madame Rivet; and the child, who was very silent and thoughtful, set off for home in the midst of this guard of honor.

Dinner was served in the workshop on long boards supported by trestles, and through the open door they could see all the enjoyment that was going on in the village. Everywhere they were feasting, and through every window were to be seen tables sur-

rounded by people in their Sunday best, and a cheerful noise was heard in every house, while the men sat in their shirt-sleeves, drinking glass after glass of cider.

In the carpenter's house the gaiety maintained somewhat of an air of reserve, the consequence of the emotion of the girls in the morning, and Rivet was the only one who was in a jolly mood, and he was drinking to excess. Madame Tellier looked at the clock every moment, for, in order not to lose two days running, they must take the 3:55 train, which would bring them to Fécamp by dark.

The carpenter tried very hard to distract her attention, so as to keep his guests until the next day, but he did not succeed, for she never joked when there was business on hand, and as soon as they had had their coffee she ordered her girls to make haste and get ready, and then, turning to her brother, she said:

"You must put in the horse immediately," and she herself went to finish her last preparations.

When she came down again, her sister-in-law was waiting to speak to her about the child, and a long conversation took place, in which, however, nothing was settled. The carpenter's wife was artful and pretended to be very much affected, and Madame Tellier, who was holding the girl on her knee, would not pledge herself to anything definite, but merely gave vague promises—she would not forget her, there was plenty of time, and besides, they would meet again.

But the conveyance did not come to the door and the women did not come downstairs. Upstairs they even heard loud laughter, romping, little screams,

and much clapping of hands, and so, while the carpenter's wife went to the stable to see whether the cart was ready, madame went upstairs.

Rivet, who was very drunk, was plaguing Rosa, who was half choking with laughter. Louise and Flora were holding him by the arms and trying to calm him, as they were shocked at his levity after that morning's ceremony; but Raphaele and Fernande were urging him on, writhing and holding their sides with laughter, and they uttered shrill cries at every rebuff the drunken fellow received.

The man was furious, his face was red, and he was trying to shake off the two women who were clinging to him, while he was pulling Rosa's skirt with all his might and stammering incoherently.

But Madame Tellier, who was very indignant, went up to her brother, seized him by the shoulders, and threw him out of the room with such violence that he fell against the wall in the passage, and a minute afterward they heard him pumping water on his head in the yard, and when he reappeared with the cart he was quite calm.

They started off in the same way as they had come the day before, and the little white horse started off with his quick, dancing trot. Under the hot sun, their fun, which had been checked during dinner, broke out again. The girls now were amused at the jolting of the cart, pushed their neighbors' chairs, and burst out laughing every moment.

There was a glare of light over the country, which dazzled their eyes, and the wheels raised two trails of dust along the highroad. Presently, Fernande, who was fond of music, asked Rosa to sing something, and she boldly struck up the "Gros Curé

de Meudon," but Madame Tellier made her stop immediately, as she thought it a very unsuitable song for such a day, and she added:

"Sing us something of Béranger's." And so, after a moment's hesitation, Rosa began Béranger's song "The Grandmother" in her worn-out voice, and all the girls, and even Madame Tellier herself, joined in the chorus:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My nimble legs,
And vanished charms."

"That is first rate," Rivet declared, carried away by the rhythm, and they shouted the refrain to every verse, while Rivet beat time on the shaft with his foot, and with the reins on the back of the horse, who, as if he himself were carried away by the rhythm, broke into a wild gallop, and threw all the women in a heap, one on top of the other, on the bottom of the conveyance.

They got up, laughing as if they were mad, and the song went on, shouted at the top of their voices, beneath the burning sky, among the ripening grain, to the rapid gallop of the little horse, who set off every time the refrain was sung, and galloped a hundred yards, to their great delight, while occasionally a stone-breaker by the roadside sat up and looked at the load of shouting females through his wire spectacles.

When they got out at the station, the carpenter said:

"I am sorry you are going; we might have had some good times together." But Madame Tellier replied very sensibly: "Everything has its right

time, and we cannot always be enjoying ourselves." And then he had a sudden inspiration:

"Look here, I will come and see you at Fécamp next month." And he gave Rosa a roguish and knowing look.

"Come," his sister replied, "you must be sensible; you may come if you like, but you are not to be up to any of your tricks."

He did not reply, and as they heard the whistle of the train, he immediately began to kiss them all. When it came to Rosa's turn, he tried to get to her mouth, which she, however, smiling with her lips closed, turned away from him each time by a rapid movement of her head to one side. He held her in his arms, but he could not attain his object, as his large whip, which he was holding in his hand and waving behind the girl's back in desperation, interfered with his movements.

"Passengers for Rouen, take your seats!" a guard cried, and they got in. There was a slight whistle, followed by a loud whistle from the engine, which noisily puffed out its first jet of steam, while the wheels began to turn a little with a visible effort, and Rivet left the station and ran along by the track to get another look at Rosa, and as the carriage passed him, he began to crack his whip and to jump, while he sang at the top of his voice:

"How I regret
My dimpled arms,
My nimble legs,
And vanished charms."

And then he watched a white pocket-handkerchief, which somebody was waving, as it disappeared in the distance.

PART III

They slept the peaceful sleep of a quiet conscience, until they got to Rouen, and when they returned to the house, refreshed and rested, Madame Tellier could not help saying:

"It was all very well, but I was longing to get home."

They hurried over their supper, and then, when they had put on their usual evening costume, waited for their regular customers, and the little colored lamp outside the door told the passers-by that Madame Tellier had returned, and in a moment the news spread, nobody knew how or through whom.

Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, even carried his friendliness so far as to send a special messenger to Monsieur Tournevau, who was in the bosom of his family.

The fish curer had several cousins to dinner every Sunday, and they were having coffee, when a man came in with a letter in his hand. Monsieur Tournevau was much excited; he opened the envelope and grew pale; it contained only these words in pencil:

"The cargo of cod has been found; the ship has come into port; good business for you. Come immediately."

He felt in his pockets, gave the messenger two sous, and suddenly blushing to his ears, he said: "I must go out." He handed his wife the laconic and mysterious note, rang the bell, and when the servant came in, he asked her to bring him has hat and overcoat immediately. As soon as he was in

the street, he began to hurry, and the way seemed to him to be twice as long as usual, in consequence of his impatience.

Madame Tellier's establishment had put on quite a holiday look. On the ground floor, a number of sailors were making a deafening noise, and Louise and Flora drank with one and the other, and were being called for in every direction at once.

The upstairs room was full by nine o'clock. Monsieur Vasse, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, Madame Tellier's regular but Platonic wooer, was talking to her in a corner in a low voice, and they were both smiling, as if they were about to come to an understanding.

Monsieur Poulin, the ex-mayor, was talking to Rosa, and she was running her hands through the old gentleman's white whiskers.

Tall Fernande was on the sofa, her feet on the coat of Monsieur Pinipesse, the tax collector, and leaning back against young Monsieur Philippe, her right arm around his neck, while she held a cigarette in her left hand.

Raphaele appeared to be talking seriously with Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and she finished by saying: "Yes, I will, yes."

Just then, the door opened suddenly, and Monsieur Tournevau came in, and was greeted with enthusiastic cries of "Long live Tournevau!" And Raphaele, who was dancing alone up and down the room, went and threw herself into his arms. He seized her in a vigorous embrace and, without saying a word, lifted her up as if she had been a feather.

Rosa was chatting to the ex-mayor, kissing him

and pulling both his whiskers at the same time, in order to keep his head straight.

Fernande and Madame Tellier remained with the four men, and Monsieur Philippe exclaimed: "I will pay for some champagne; get three bottles, Madame Tellier." And Fernande gave him a hug, and whispered to him: "Play us a waltz, will you?" So he rose and sat down at the old piano in the corner, and managed to get a hoarse waltz out of the depths of the instrument.

The tall girl put her arms round the tax collector, Madame Tellier let Monsieur Vasse take her round the waist, and the two couples turned round, kissing as they danced. Monsieur Vasse, who had formerly danced in good society, waltzed with such elegance that Madame Tellier was quite captivated.

Frederic brought the champagne; the first cork popped, and Monsieur Philippe played the introduction to a quadrille, through which the four dancers walked in society fashion, decorously, with propriety, deportment, bows and curtsies, and then they began to drink.

Monsieur Philippe next struck up a lively polka, and Monsieur Tournevau started off with the handsome Jewess, whom he held without letting her feet touch the ground. Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Vasse had started off with renewed vigor, and from time to time one or other couple would stop to toss off a long draught of sparkling wine, and that dance was threatening to become never-ending, when Rosa opened the door.

"I want to dance," she exclaimed. And she caught hold of Monsieur Dupuis, who was sitting idle on the couch, and the dance began again.

But the bottles were empty. "I will pay for one," Monsieur Tournevau said. "So will I," Monsieur Vasse declared. "And I will do the same," Monsieur Dupuis remarked.

They all began to clap their hands, and it soon became a regular ball, and from time to time Louise and Flora ran upstairs quickly and had a few turns, while their customers downstairs grew impatient, and then they returned regretfully to the tap-room. At midnight they were still dancing.

Madame Tellier let them amuse themselves while she had long private talks in corners with Monsieur Vasse, as if to settle the last details of something that had already been settled.

At last, at one o'clock, the two married men, Monsieur Tournevau and Monsieur Pinipesse, declared that they were going home, and wanted to pay. Nothing was charged for except the champagne, and that cost only six francs a bottle, instead of ten, which was the usual price, and when they expressed their surprise at such generosity, Madame Tellier, who was beaming, said to them:

"We don't have a holiday every day."

DENIS

To Léon Chapron.

MARAMBOT opened the letter which his servant Denis gave him and smiled.

For twenty years Denis has been a servant in this house. He was a short, stout, jovial man, who was known throughout the countryside as a model servant. He asked:

"Is monsieur pleased? Has monsieur received good news?"

M. Marambot was not rich. He was an old village druggist, a bachelor, who lived on an income acquired with difficulty by selling drugs to the farmers. He answered:

"Yes, my boy. Old man Malois is afraid of the law-suit with which I am threatening him. I shall get my money to-morrow. Five thousand francs are not liable to harm the account of an old bachelor."

M. Marambot rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He was a man of quiet temperament, more sad than gay, incapable of any prolonged effort, careless in business.

He could undoubtedly have amassed a greater income had he taken advantage of the deaths of colleagues established in more important centers, by taking their places and carrying on their business. But the trouble of moving and the thought of all the preparations had always stopped him. After think-

ing the matter over for a few days, he would be satisfied to say:

"Bah! I'll wait until the next time. I'll not lose anything by the delay. I may even find something better."

Denis, on the contrary, was always urging his master to new enterprises. Of an energetic temperament, he would continually repeat:

"Oh! If I had only had the capital to start out with, I could have made a fortune! One thousand francs would do me."

M. Marambot would smile without answering and would go out in his little garden, where, his hands behind his back, he would walk about dreaming.

All day long, Denis sang the joyful refrains of the folk-songs of the district. He even showed an unusual activity, for he cleaned all the windows of the house, energetically rubbing the glass, and singing at the top of his voice.

M. Marambot, surprised at his zeal, said to him several times, smiling:

"My boy, if you work like that there will be nothing left for you to do to-morrow."

The following day, at about nine o'clock in the morning, the postman gave Denis four letters for his master, one of them very heavy. M. Marambot immediately shut himself up in his room until late in the afternoon. He then handed his servant four letters for the mail. One of them was addressed to M. Malois; it was undoubtedly a receipt for the money.

Denis asked his master no questions; he appeared to be as sad and gloomy that day as he had seemed joyful the day before.

Night came. M. Marambot went to bed as usual and slept.

He was awakened by a strange noise. He sat up in his bed and listened. Suddenly the door opened, and Denis appeared, holding in one hand a candle and in the other a carving knife, his eyes staring, his face contracted as though moved by some deep emotion; he was as pale as a ghost.

M. Marambot, astonished, thought that he was sleep-walking, and he was going to get out of bed and assist him when the servant blew out the light and rushed for the bed. His master stretched out his hands to receive the shock which knocked him over on his back; he was trying to seize the hands of his servant, whom he now thought to be crazy, in order to avoid the blows which the latter was aiming at him.

He was struck by the knife; once in the shoulder, once in the forehead and the third time in the chest. He fought wildly, waving his arms around in the darkness, kicking and crying:

"Denis! Denis! Are you mad? Listen, Denis!"

But the latter, gasping for breath, kept up his furious attack, always striking, always repulsed, sometimes with a kick, sometimes with a punch, and rushing forward again furiously.

M. Marambot was wounded twice more, once in the leg and once in the stomach. But, suddenly, a thought flashed across his mind, and he began to shriek:

"Stop, stop, Denis, I have not yet received my money!"

The man immediately ceased, and his master could hear his labored breathing in the darkness.

M. Marambot then went on:

"I have received nothing. M. Malois takes back what he said, the law-suit will take place; that is why you carried the letters to the mail. Just read those on my desk."

With a final effort, he reached for his matches and lit the candle.

He was covered with blood. His sheets, his curtains, and even the walls, were spattered with red. Denis, standing in the middle of the room, was also bloody from head to foot.

When he saw the blood, M. Marambot thought himself dead, and fell unconscious.

At break of day he revived. It was some time, however, before he regained his senses, and was able to understand or remember. But, suddenly, the memory of the attack and of his wounds returned to him, and he was filled with such terror that he closed his eyes in order not to see anything. After a few minutes he grew calmer and began to think. He had not died immediately, therefore he might still recover. He felt weak, very weak; but he had no real pain, although he noticed an uncomfortable smarting sensation in several parts of his body. He also felt icy cold, and all wet, and as though wrapped up in bandages. He thought that this dampness came from the blood which he had lost; and he shivered at the dreadful thought of this red liquid which had come from his veins and covered his bed. The idea of seeing this terrible spectacle again so upset him that he kept his eyes closed with all his strength, as though they might open in spite of himself.

What had become of Denis? He had probably escaped.

But what could he, Marambot, do now? Get up? Call for help? But if he should make the slightest motions, his wounds would undoubtedly open up again and he would die from loss of blood.

Suddenly he heard the door of his room open. His heart almost stopped. It was certainly Denis who was coming to finish him up. He held his breath in order to make the murderer think that he had been successful.

He felt his sheet being lifted up, and then someone feeling his stomach. A sharp pain near his hip made him start. He was being very gently washed with cold water. Therefore, someone must have discovered the misdeed and he was being cared for. A wild joy seized him; but prudently, he did not wish to show that he was conscious. He opened one eye, just one, with the greatest precaution.

He recognized Denis standing beside him, Denis himself! Mercy! He hastily closed his eye again.

Denis! What could he be doing? What did he want? What awful scheme could he now be carrying out?

What was he doing? Well, he was washing him in order to hide the traces of his crime! And he would now bury him in the garden, under ten feet of earth, so that no one could discover him! Or perhaps under the wine cellar! And M. Marambot began to tremble like a leaf. He kept saying to himself: "I am lost, lost!" He closed his eyes so as not to see the knife as it descended for the final stroke. It did not come. Denis was now lifting him up and bandaging him. Then he began carefully

to dress the wound on his leg, as his master had taught him to do.

There was no longer any doubt. His servant, after wishing to kill him, was trying to save him.

Then M. Marambot, in a dying voice, gave him the practical piece of advice:

"Wash the wounds in a dilute solution of carbolic acid!"

Denis answered:

"This is what I am doing, monsieur."

M. Marambot opened both his eyes. There was no sign of blood either on the bed, on the walls, or on the murderer. The wounded man was stretched out on clean white sheets.

The two men looked at each other.

Finally M. Marambot said calmly:

"You have been guilty of a great crime."

Denis answered:

"I am trying to make up for it, monsieur. If you will not tell on me, I will serve you as faithfully as in the past."

This was no time to anger his servant. M. Marambot murmured as he closed his eyes:

"I swear not to tell on you."

Denis saved his master. He spent days and nights without sleep, never leaving the sick room, preparing drugs, broths, potions, feeling his pulse, anxiously counting the beats, attending him with the skill of a trained nurse and the devotion of a son.

He continually asked:

"Well, monsieur, how do you feel?"

M. Marambot would answer in a weak voice:

"A little better, my boy, thank you."

And when the sick man would wake up at night, he would often see his servant seated in an arm-chair, weeping silently.

Never had the old druggist been so cared for, so fondled, so spoiled. At first he had said to himself:

"As soon as I am well I shall get rid of this rascal."

He was now convalescing, and from day to day he would put off dismissing his murderer. He thought that no one would ever show him such care and attention, for he held this man through fear; and he warned him that he had left a document with a lawyer denouncing him to the law if any new accident should occur.

This precaution seemed to guarantee him against any future attack; and he then asked himself if it would not be wiser to keep this man near him, in order to watch him closely.

Just as formerly, when he would hesitate about taking some larger place of business, he could not make up his mind to any decision.

"There is always time," he would say to himself.

Denis continued to show himself an admirable servant. M. Marambot was well. He kept him.

One morning, just as he was finishing breakfast, he suddenly heard a great noise in the kitchen. He hastened in there. Denis was struggling with two gendarmes. An officer was taking notes on his pad.

As soon as he saw his master, the servant began to sob, exclaiming:

"You told on me, monsieur, that's not right, after what you had promised me. You have broken your

word of honor, Monsieur Marambot; that's not right, that's not right!"

M. Marambot, bewildered and distressed at being suspected, lifted his hand:

"I swear to you before the Lord, my boy, that I did not tell on you. I haven't the slightest idea how the police could have found out about your attack on me."

The officer started:

"You say that he attacked you, M. Marambot?"

The bewildered druggist answered:

"Yes—but I did not tell on him—I haven't said a word—I swear it—he has served me excellently from that time on——"

The officer pronounced severely:

"I will take down your testimony. The law will take notice of this new action, of which it was ignorant, Monsieur Marambot. I was commissioned to arrest your servant for the theft of two ducks surreptitiously taken by him from M. Duhamel of which act there are witnesses. I shall make a note of your information."

Then, turning toward his men, he ordered:

"Come on, bring him along!"

The two gendarmes dragged Denis out.

The lawyer used a plea of insanity, contrasting the two misdeeds in order to strengthen his argument. He had clearly proved that the theft of the two ducks came from the same mental condition as the eight knife-wounds in the body of Marambot. He had cunningly analyzed all the phases of this transitory condition of mental aberration, which

could, doubtless, be cured by a few months' treatment in a reputable sanatorium. He had spoken in enthusiastic terms of the continued devotion of this faithful servant, of the care with which he had surrounded his master, wounded by him in a moment of alienation.

Touched by this memory, M. Marambot felt the tears rising to his eyes.

The lawyer noticed it, opened his arms with a broad gesture, spreading out the long black sleeves of his robe like the wings of a bat, and exclaimed:

"Look, look, gentleman of the jury, look at those tears. What more can I say for my client? What speech, what argument, what reasoning would be worth these tears of his master? They speak louder than I do, louder than the law; they cry: 'Mercy, for the poor wandering mind of a while ago!' They implore, they pardon, they bless!"

He was silent and sat down.

Then the judge, turning to Marambot, whose testimony had been excellent for his servant, asked him:

"But, monsieur, even admitting that you consider this man insane, that does not explain why you should have kept him. He was none the less dangerous."

Marambot, wiping his eyes, answered:

"Well, your honor, what can you expect? Nowadays it's so hard to find good servants—I could never have found a better one."

Denis was acquitted and put in a sanatorium at his master's expense.

MY WIFE

IT had been a stag dinner. These men still came together once in a while without their wives, as they had done when they were bachelors. They would eat for a long time, drink for a long time; they would talk of everything, stir up those old and joyful memories which bring a smile to the lip and a tremor to the heart. One of them was saying: "Georges, do you remember our excursion to Saint-Germain with those two little girls from Montmartre?"

"I should say I do!"

And a little detail here or there would be remembered, and all these things brought joy to the hearts.

The conversation turned on marriage, and each one said with a sincere air: "Oh, if it were to do over again!" Georges Duportin added: "It's strange how easily one falls into it. You have fully decided never to marry; and then, in the springtime, you go to the country; the weather is warm; the summer is beautiful; the fields are full of flowers; you meet a young girl at some friend's house—crash! all is over. You return married!"

Pierre Létoile exclaimed: "Correct! that is exactly my case, only there were some peculiar incidents——"

His friend interrupted him: "As for you, you have no cause to complain. You have the most

charming wife in the world, pretty, amiable, perfect! You are undoubtedly the happiest one of us all."

The other one continued: "It's not my fault."

"How so?"

"It is true that I have a perfect wife, but I certainly married her much against my will."

"Nonsense!"

"Yes—this is the adventure. I was thirty-five, and I had no more idea of marrying than I had of hanging myself. Young girls seemed to me to be inane, and I loved pleasure.

"During the month of May I was invited to the wedding of my cousin, Simon d'Erabel, in Normandy. It was a regular Normandy wedding. We sat down at the table at five o'clock in the evening and at eleven o'clock we were still eating. I had been paired off, for the occasion, with a Mademoiselle Dumoulin, daughter of a retired colonel, a young, blond, soldierly person, well formed, frank and talkative. She took complete possession of me for the whole day, dragged me into the park, made me dance willy-nilly, bored me to death. I said to myself: 'That's all very well for to-day, but to-morrow I'll get out. That's all there is to it!'

"Toward eleven o'clock at night the women retired to their rooms; the men stayed, smoking while they drank or drinking while they smoked, whichever you will.

"Through the open window we could see the country folks dancing. Farmers and peasant girls were jumping about in a circle, yelling at the top of their lungs a dance air which was feebly accompanied by two violins and a clarinet. The wild song of the peasants often completely drowned the sound

of the instruments, and the weak music, interrupted by the unrestrained voices, seemed to come to us in little fragments of scattered notes. Two enormous casks, surrounded by flaming torches, contained drinks for the crowd. Two men were kept busy rinsing the glasses or bowls in a bucket and immediately holding them under the spigots, from which flowed the red stream of wine or the golden stream of pure cider; and the parched dancers, the old ones quietly, the girls panting, came up, stretched out their arms and grasped some receptacle, threw back their heads and poured down their throats the drink which they preferred. On a table were bread, butter, cheese and sausages. Each one would step up from time to time and swallow a mouthful, and under the starlit sky this healthy and violent exercise was a pleasing sight, and made one also feel like drinking from these enormous casks and eating the crisp bread and butter with a raw onion.

"A mad desire seized me to take part in this merrymaking, and I left my companions. I must admit that I was probably a little tipsy, but I was soon entirely so.

"I grabbed the hand of a big, panting peasant woman and I jumped her about until I was out of breath.

"Then I drank some wine and reached for another girl. In order to refresh myself afterward. I swallowed a bowlful of cider, and I began to bounce around as if possessed.

"I was very light on my feet. The boys, delighted, were watching me and trying to imitate me; the girls all wished to dance with me, and jumped about heavily with the grace of cows.

"After each dance I drank a glass of wine or a glass of cider, and toward two o'clock in the morning I was so drunk that I could hardly stand up.

"I realized my condition and tried to reach my room. Everybody was asleep and the house was silent and dark.

"I had no matches and everybody was in bed. As soon as I reached the vestibule I began to feel dizzy. I had a lot of trouble to find the banister. At last, by accident, my hand came in contact with it, and I sat down on the first step of the stairs in order to try to gather my scattered wits.

"My room was on the second floor; it was the third door to the left. Fortunately I had not forgotten that. Armed with this knowledge, I arose, not without difficulty, and I began to ascend, step by step. In my hands I firmly gripped the iron railing in order not to fall, and took great pains to make no noise.

"Only three or four times did my foot miss the steps, and I went down on my knees; but thanks to the energy of my arms and the strength of my will, I avoided falling completely.

"At last I reached the second floor and I set out in my journey along the hall, feeling my way by the walls. I felt one door; I counted: 'One'; but a sudden dizziness made me lose my hold on the wall, make a strange turn and fall up against the other wall. I wished to turn in a straight line. The crossing was long and full of hardships. At last I reached the shore, and, prudently, I began to travel along again until I met another door. In order to be sure to make no mistake, I again counted out loud: 'Two.' I started out on my walk again. At

last I found the third door. I said: 'Three, that's my room,' and I turned the knob. The door opened. Notwithstanding my befuddled state, I thought: 'Since the door opens, this must be home.' After softly closing the door, I stepped out in the darkness. I bumped against something soft: my easy-chair. I immediately stretched myself out on it.

"In my condition it would not have been wise to look for my bureau, my candles, my matches. It would have taken me at least two hours. It would probably have taken me that long also to undress; and even then I might not have succeeded. I gave it up.

"I only took my shoes off; I unbuttoned my waistcoat, which was choking me, I loosened my trousers and went to sleep.

"This undoubtedly lasted for a long time. I was suddenly awakened by a deep voice which was saying: 'What, you lazy girl, still in bed? It's ten o'clock!'

"A woman's voice answered: 'Already! I was so tired yesterday.'

"In bewilderment I wondered what this dialogue meant. Where was I? What had I done? My mind was wandering, still surrounded by a heavy fog. The first voice continued: 'I'm going to raise your curtains.'

"I heard steps approaching me. Completely at a loss what to do, I sat up. Then a hand was placed on my head. I started. The voice asked: 'Who is there?' I took good care not to answer. A furious grasp seized me. I in turn seized him, and a terrific struggle ensued. We were rolling around, knocking

over the furniture and crashing against the walls. A woman's voice was shrieking: 'Help! help!'

"Servants, neighbors, frightened women crowded around us. The blinds were open and the shades drawn. I was struggling with Colonel Dumoulin!

"I had slept beside his daughter's bed!

"When we were separated, I escaped to my room, dumbfounded. I locked myself in and sat down with my feet on a chair, for my shoes had been left in the young girl's room.

"I heard a great noise through the whole house, doors being opened and closed, whisperings and rapid steps.

"After half an hour some one knocked on my door. I cried: 'Who is there?' It was my uncle, the bridegroom's father. I opened the door.

"He was pale and furious, and he treated me harshly: 'You have behaved like a scoundrel in my house, do you hear?' Then he added more gently: 'But, you young fool, why the devil did you let yourself get caught at ten o'clock in the morning? You go to sleep like a log in that room, instead of leaving immediately—immediately after.'

"I exclaimed: 'But, uncle, I assure you that nothing occurred. I was drunk and got into the wrong room.'

"He shrugged his shoulders: 'Don't talk nonsense.' I raised my hand, exclaiming: 'I swear to you on my honor.' My uncle continued: 'Yes, that's all right. It's your duty to say that.'

"I in turn grew angry and told him the whole unfortunate occurrence. He looked at me with a bewildered expression, not knowing what to believe. Then he went out to confer with the colonel.

"I heard that a kind of jury of the mothers had been formed, to which were submitted the different phases of the situation.

"He came back an hour later, sat down with the dignity of a judge and began: 'No matter what may be the situation, I can see only one way out of it for you; it is to marry Mademoiselle Dumoulin.'

"I bounded out of the chair, crying: 'Never! never!'

"Gravely he asked: 'Well, what do you expect to do?'

"I answered simply: 'Why—leave as soon as my shoes are returned to me.'

"My uncle continued: 'Please do not jest. The colonel has decided to blow your brains out as soon as he sees you. And you may be sure that he does not threaten idly. I spoke of a duel and he answered: "No, I tell you that I will blow his brains out."

" 'Let us now examine the question from another point of view. Either you have misbehaved yourself—and then so much the worse for you, my boy; one should not go near a young girl—or else, being drunk, as you say, you made a mistake in the room. In this case, it's even worse for you. You shouldn't get yourself into such foolish situations. Whatever you may say, the poor girl's reputation is lost, for a drunkard's excuses are never believed. The only real victim in the matter is the girl. Think it over.'

"He went away, while I cried after him: 'Say what you will, I'll not marry her!'

"I stayed alone for another hour. Then my aunt came. She was crying. She used every argument. No one believed my story. They could not imagine

that this young girl could have forgotten to lock her door in a house full of company. The colonel had struck her. She had been crying the whole morning. It was a terrible and unforgettable scandal. And my good aunt added: 'Ask for her hand, anyhow. We may, perhaps, find some way out of it when we are drawing up the papers.'

"This prospect relieved me. And I agreed to write my proposal. An hour later I left for Paris. The following day I was informed that I had been accepted.

"Then, in three weeks, before I had been able to find any excuse, the banns were published, the announcement sent out, the contract signed, and one Monday morning I found myself in a church, beside a weeping young girl, after telling the magistrate that I consented to take her as my companion—for better, for worse.

"I had not seen her since my adventure, and I glanced at her out of the corner of my eye with a certain malevolent surprise. However, she was not ugly—far from it. I said to myself: 'There is some one who won't laugh every day.'

"She did not look at me once until the evening, and she did not say a single word.

"Toward the middle of the night I entered the bridal chamber with the full intention of letting her know my resolutions, for I was now master. I found her sitting in an armchair, fully dressed, pale and with red eyes. As soon as I entered she rose and came slowly toward me, saying: 'Monsieur, I am ready to do whatever you may command. I will kill myself if you so desire.'

"The colonel's daughter was as pretty as she

could be in this heroic rôle. I kissed her; it was my privilege.

"I soon saw that I had not got a bad bargain. I have now been married five years. I do not regret it in the least."

Pierre Létoile was silent. His companions were laughing. One of them said: "Marriage is indeed a lottery; you must never choose your numbers. The haphazard ones are the best."

Another added by way of conclusion: "Yes, but do not forget that the god of drunkards chose for Pierre."

THE UNKNOWN

WE were speaking of adventures, and each one of us was relating his story of delightful experiences, surprising meetings, on the train, in a hotel, at the seashore. According to Roger des Annettes, the seashore was particularly favorable to the little blind god.

Gontran, who was keeping mum, was asked what he thought of it.

"I guess Paris is about the best place for that," he said. "Woman is like a precious trinket, we appreciate her all the more when we meet her in the most unexpected places; but the rarest ones are only to be found in Paris."

He was silent for a moment, and then continued:

"By Jove, it's great! Walk along the streets on some spring morning. The little women, daintily tripping along, seem to blossom out like flowers. What a delightful, charming sight! The dainty perfume of violet is everywhere. The city is gay, and everybody notices the women. By Jove, how tempting they are in their light, thin dresses, which occasionally give one a glimpse of the delicate pink flesh beneath!

"One saunters along, head up, mind alert, and eyes open. I tell you, it's great! You see her in the distance, while still a block away; you already know that she is going to please you at closer quar-

ters. You can recognize her by the flower on her hat, the toss of her head, or her gait. She approaches, and you say to yourself: 'Look out, here she is!' You come closer to her and you devour her with your eyes.

"Is it a young girl running errands for some store, a young woman returning from church, or hastening to see her lover? What do you care? Her well-rounded bosom shows through the thin waist. Oh, if you could only take her in your arms and fondle and kiss her! Her glance may be timid or bold, her hair light or dark. What difference does it make? She brushes against you, and a cold shiver runs down your spine. Ah, how you wish for her all day! How many of these dear creatures have I met this way, and how wildly in love I would have been had I known them more intimately!

"Have you ever noticed that the ones we would love the most distractedly are those whom we never meet to know? Curious, isn't it? From time to time we barely catch a glimpse of some woman, the mere sight of whom thrills our senses. But it goes no further. When I think of all the adorable creatures that I have elbowed in the streets of Paris, I fairly rave. Who are they! Where are they? Where can I find them again? There is a proverb which says that happiness often passes our way; I am sure that I have often passed alongside the one who could have caught me like a linnet in the snare of her fresh beauty."

Roger des Annettes had listened smilingly. He answered: "I know that as well as you do. This is what happened to me: About five years ago, for

the first time I met, on the Pont de la Concorde, a young woman who made a wonderful impression on me. She was dark, rather stout, with glossy hair, and eyebrows which nearly met above two dark eyes. On her lip was a scarcely perceptible down, which made one dream—dream as one dreams of beloved woods, on seeing a bunch of wild violets. She had a small waist and a well-developed bust, which seemed to present a challenge, offer a temptation. Her eyes were like two black spots on white enamel. Her glance was strange, vacant, unthinking, and yet wonderfully beautiful.

"I imagined that she might be a Jewess. I followed her, and then turned round to look at her, as did many others. She walked with a swinging gait that was not graceful, but somehow attracted one. At the Place de la Concorde she took a carriage, and I stood there like a fool, moved by the strongest desire that had ever assailed me.

"For about three weeks I thought only of her; and then her memory passed out of my mind.

"Six months later I descried her in the Rue de la Paix again. On seeing her I felt the same shock that one experiences on seeing a once dearly loved woman. I stopped that I might better observe her. When she passed close enough to touch me I felt as though I were standing before a red hot furnace. Then, when she had passed by, I noticed a delicious sensation, as of a cooling breeze blowing over my face. I did not follow her. I was afraid of doing something foolish. I was afraid of myself.

"She haunted all my dreams.

"It was a year before I saw her again. But just as the sun was going down on one beautiful eve-

ning in May I recognized her walking along the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. The Arc de Triomphe stood out in bold relief against the fiery glow of the sky. A golden haze filled the air; it was one of those delightful spring evenings which are the glory of Paris.

"I followed her, tormented by a desire to address her, to kneel before her, to pour forth the emotion which was choking me. Twice I passed by her only to fall back, and each time as I passed by I felt this sensation, as of scorching heat, which I had noticed in the Rue de la Paix.

"She glanced at me, and then I saw her enter a house on the Rue de Presbourg. I waited for her two hours and she did not come out. Then I decided to question the janitor. He seemed not to understand me. 'She must be visiting some one,' he said.

"The next time I was eight months without seeing her. But one freezing morning in January, I was walking along the Boulevard Malesherbes at a dog trot, so as to keep warm, when at the corner I bumped into a woman and knocked a small package out of her hand. I tried to apologize. It was she!

"At first I stood stock still from the shock; then having returned to her the package which she had dropped, I said abruptly:

"'I am both grieved and delighted, madame, to have jostled you. For more than two years I have known you, admired you, and had the most ardent wish to be presented to you; nevertheless I have been unable to find out who you are, or where you live. Please excuse these foolish words. Attribute them to a passionate desire to be numbered among

your acquaintances. Such sentiments can surely offend you in no way! You do not know me. My name is Baron Roger des Annettes. Make inquiries about me, and you will find that I am a gentleman. Now, if you refuse my request, you will throw me into abject misery. Please be good to me and tell me how I can see you.'

"She looked at me with her strange vacant stare, and answered smilingly:

"'Give me your address. I will come and see you.'

"I was so dumfounded that I must have shown my surprise. But I quickly gathered my wits together and gave her a visiting card, which she slipped into her pocket with a quick, deft movement.

"Becoming bolder, I stammered:

"'When shall I see you again?'

"She hesitated, as though mentally running over her list of engagements, and then murmured:

"'Will Sunday morning suit you?'

"'I should say it would!'

"She went on, after having stared at me, judged, weighed and analyzed me with this heavy and vacant gaze which seemed to leave a quieting and deadening impression on the person towards whom it was directed.

"Until Sunday my mind was occupied day and night trying to guess who she might be and planning my course of conduct towards her. I finally decided to buy her a jewel, a beautiful little jewel, which I placed in its box on the mantelpiece, and left it there awaiting her arrival.

"I spent a restless night waiting for her.

"At ten o'clock she came, calm and quiet, and

with her hand outstretched, as though she had known me for years. Drawing up a chair, I took her hat and coat and furs, and laid them aside. And then, timidly, I took her hand in mine; after that all went on without a hitch.

"Ah, my friends! what a bliss it is, to stand at a discreet distance and watch the hidden pink and blue ribbons, partly concealed, to observe the hazy lines of the beloved one's form, as they become visible through the last of the filmy garments! What a delight it is to watch the ostrich-like modesty of those who are in reality none too modest. And what is so pretty as their motions!

"Her back was turned towards me, and suddenly, my eyes were irresistibly drawn to a large black spot right between her shoulders. What could it be? Were my eyes deceiving me? But no, there it was, staring me in the face! Then my mind reverted to the faint down on her lip, the heavy eyebrows almost meeting over her coal-black eyes, her glossy black hair—I should have been prepared for some surprise.

"Nevertheless I was dumfounded, and my mind was haunted by dim visions of strange adventures. I seemed to see before me one of the evil genii of the *Thousand and One Nights,* one of these dangerous and crafty creatures whose mission it is to drag men down to unknown depths. I thought of Solomon, who made the Queen of Sheba walk on a mirror that he might be sure that her feet were not cloven.

"And when the time came for me to sing of love to her, my voice forsook me. At first she showed

surprise, which soon turned to anger; and she said, quickly putting on her wraps:

"'It was hardly worth while for me to go out of my way to come here.'

"I wanted her to accept the ring which I had bought for her, but she replied haughtily: 'For whom do you take me, sir?' I blushed to the roots of my hair. She left without saying another word.

"There is my whole adventure. But the worst part of it is that I am now madly in love with her. I can't see a woman without thinking of her. All the others disgust me, unless they remind me of *her*. I cannot kiss a woman without seeing *her* face before me, and without suffering the torture of unsatisfied desire. She is always with me, always there, dressed or nude, my true love. She is there, beside the other one, visible but intangible. I am almost willing to believe that she was bewitched, and carried a talisman between her shoulders.

"Who is she? I don't know yet. I have met her once or twice since. I bowed, but she pretended not to recognize me. Who is she? An Oriental? Yes, doubtless an oriental Jewess! I believe that she must be a Jewess! But why? Why? I don't know!"

THE APPARITION

THE subject of sequestration of the person came up in speaking of a recent lawsuit, and each of us had a story to tell—a true story, he said. We had been spending the evening together at an old family mansion in the Rue de Grenelle, just a party of intimate friends. The old Marquis de la Tour-Samuel, who was eighty-two, rose, and, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece, said in his somewhat shaky voice:

"I also know of something strange, so strange that it has haunted me all my life. It is now fifty-six years since the incident occurred, and yet not a month passes that I do not see it again in a dream, so great is the impression of fear it has left on my mind. For ten minutes I experienced such horrible fright that ever since then a sort of constant terror has remained with me. Sudden noises startle me violently, and objects imperfectly distinguished at night inspire me with a mad desire to flee from them. In short, I am afraid of the dark!

"But I would not have acknowledged that before I reached my present age. Now I can say anything. I have never receded before real danger, ladies. It is, therefore, permissible, at eighty-two years of age, not to be brave in presence of imaginary danger.

"That affair so completely upset me, caused me such deep and mysterious and terrible distress, that

I never spoke of it to any one. I will now tell it to you exactly as it happened, without any attempt at explanation.

"In July, 1827, I was stationed at Rouen. One day as I was walking along the quay I met a man whom I thought I recognized without being able to recall exactly who he was. Instinctively I made a movement to stop. The stranger perceived it and at once extended his hand.

"He was a friend to whom I had been deeply attached as a youth. For five years I had not seen him; he seemed to have aged half a century. His hair was quite white and he walked bent over as though completely exhausted. He apparently understood my surprise, and he told me of the misfortune which had shattered his life.

"Having fallen madly in love with a young girl, he had married her, but after a year of more than earthly happiness she died suddenly of an affection of the heart. He left his country home on the very day of her burial and came to his town house in Rouen, where he lived, alone and unhappy, so sad and wretched that he thought constantly of suicide.

" 'Since I have found you again in this manner,' he said, 'I will ask you to render me an important service. It is to go and get me out of the desk in my bedroom—our bedroom—some papers of which I have urgent need. I cannot send a servant or a business clerk, as discretion and absolute silence are necessary. As for myself, nothing on earth would induce me to reënter that house. I will give you the key of the room, which I myself locked on leaving, and the key of my desk, also a few words for my gardener, telling him to open the château

for you. But come and breakfast with me to-morrow and we will arrange all that.'

"I promised to do him the slight favor he asked. It was, for that matter, only a ride which I could make in an hour on horseback, his property being but a few miles distant from Rouen.

"At ten o'clock the following day I breakfasted, *tête-à-tête,* with my friend, but he scarcely spoke.

"He begged me to pardon him; the thought of the visit I was about to make to that room, the scene of his dead happiness, overcame him, he said. He, indeed, seemed singularly agitated and preoccupied, as though undergoing some mysterious mental struggle.

"At length he explained to me exactly what I had to do. It was very simple. I must take two packages of letters and a roll of papers from the first right-hand drawer of the desk, of which I had the key. He added:

"'I need not beg you to refrain from glancing at them.'

"I was wounded at that remark and told him so somewhat sharply. He stammered:

"'Forgive me, I suffer so,' and tears came to his eyes.

"At about one o'clock I took leave of him to accomplish my mission.

"The weather was glorious, and I trotted across the fields, listening to the song of the larks and the rhythmical clang of my sword against my boot. Then I entered the forest and walked my horse. Branches of trees caressed my face as I passed, nd now and then I caught a leaf with my tee' ınd

chewed it, from sheer gladness of heart at being alive and vigorous on such a radiant day.

"As I approached the château I took from my pocket the letter I had for the gardener, and was astonished at finding it sealed. I was so irritated that I was about to turn back without having fulfilled my promise, but reflected that I should thereby display undue susceptibility. My friend in his troubled condition might easily have fastened the envelope without noticing that he did so.

"The manor looked as if it had been abandoned for twenty years. The open gate was falling from its hinges, the walks were overgrown with grass and the flower beds were no longer distinguishable.

"The noise I made by kicking at a shutter brought out an old man from a side door. He seemed stunned with astonishment at seeing me. On receiving my letter, he read it, reread it, turned it over and over, looked me up and down, put the paper in his pocket and finally said:

" 'Well, what is it you wish?'

"I replied shortly:

" 'You ought to know, since you have just read your master's orders. I wish to enter the château.'

"He seemed overcome.

" 'Then you are going in—into her room?'

"I began to lose patience.

" 'Damn it! Are you presuming to question me?'

"He stammered in confusion:

" 'No—sir—but—but it has not been opened since—since the—death. If you will be kind enough to wait five minutes I will go and—and see if——'

"I interrupted him angrily:

" 'See here, what do you mean by your tricks?

You know very well you cannot enter the room, since here is the key!'

"He no longer objected.

" 'Then, sir, I will show you the way.'

" 'Show me the staircase and leave me. I'll find my way without you.'

" 'But—sir—indeed——'

"This time I lost patience, and pushing him aside, went into the house.

"I first went through the kitchen, then two rooms occupied by this man and his wife. I then crossed a large hall, mounted a staircase and recognized the door described by my friend.

"I easily opened it, and entered the apartment. It was so dark that at first I could distinguish nothing. I stopped short, disagreeably affected by that disagreeable, musty odor of closed, unoccupied rooms. As my eyes slowly became accustomed to the darkness I saw plainly enough a large and disordered bedroom, the bed without sheets but still retaining its mattresses and pillows, on one of which was a deep impression, as though an elbow or a head had recently rested there.

"The chairs all seemed out of place. I noticed that a door, doubtless that of a closet, had remained half open.

"I first went to the window, which I opened to let in the light, but the fastenings of the shutters had grown so rusty that I could not move them. I even tried to break them with my sword, but without success. As I was growing irritated over my useless efforts and could now see fairly well in the semi-darkness, I gave up the hope of getting more light, and went over to the writing desk.

"I seated myself in an armchair and, letting down the lid of the desk, I opened the drawer designated. It was full to the top. I needed but three packages, which I knew how to recognize, and began searching for them.

"I was straining my eyes in the effort to read the superscriptions when I seemed to hear, or, rather, feel, something rustle back of me. I paid no attention, believing that a draught from the window was moving some drapery. But in a minute or so another movement, almost imperceptible, sent a strangely disagreeable little shiver over my skin. It was so stupid to be affected, even slightly, that self-respect prevented my turning around. I had just found the second package I needed and was about to lay my hand on the third when a long and painful sigh, uttered just at my shoulder, made me bound like a madman from my seat and land several feet off. As I jumped I had turned round my hand on the hilt of my sword, and, truly, if I had not felt it at my side I should have taken to my heels like a coward.

"A tall woman, dressed in white, stood gazing at me from the back of the chair where I had been sitting an instant before.

"Such a shudder ran through all my limbs that I nearly fell backward. No one who has not experienced it can understand that frightful, unreasoning terror! The mind becomes vague, the heart ceases to beat, the entire body grows as limp as a sponge.

"I do not believe in ghosts, nevertheless I collapsed from a hideous dread of the dead, and I suffered, oh! I suffered in a few moments more than in all the rest of my life from the irresistible terror

of the supernatural. If she had not spoken I should have died perhaps. But she spoke, she spoke in a sweet, sad voice that set my nerves vibrating. I dare not say that I became master of myself and recovered my reason. No! I was terrified and scarcely knew what I was doing. But a certain innate pride, a remnant of soldierly instinct, made me, almost in spite of myself, maintain a bold front. She said:

"'Oh, sir, you can render me a great service.'

"I wanted to reply, but it was impossible for me to pronounce a word. Only a vague sound came from my throat. She continued:

"'Will you? You can save me, cure me. I suffer frightfully. I suffer, oh! how I suffer!' and she slowly seated herself in my armchair, still looking at me.

"'Will you?' she said.

"I nodded in assent, my voice still being paralyzed.

"Then she held out to me a tortoise-shell comb and murmured:

"'Comb my hair, oh! comb my hair; that will cure me; it must be combed. Look at my head—how I suffer; and my hair pulls so!'

"Her hair, unbound, very long and very black, it seemed to me, hung over the back of the armchair and touched the floor.

"Why did I promise? Why did I take that comb with a shudder, and why did I hold in my hands her long black hair that gave my skin a frightful cold sensation, as though I were handling snakes? I cannot tell.

"That sensation has remained in my fingers, and I still tremble in recalling it.

"I combed her hair. I handled, I know not how, those icy locks. I twisted, knotted, and unknotted, and braided them. She sighed, bowed her head, seemed happy. Suddenly she said, 'Thank you!' snatched the comb from my hands and fled by the door that I had noticed ajar.

"Left alone, I experienced for several seconds the horrible agitation of one who awakens from a nightmare. At length I regained my senses. I ran to the window and with a mighty effort burst open the shutters, letting a flood of light into the room. Immediately I sprang to the door by which that being had departed. I found it closed and immovable!

"Then the mad desire to flee overcame me like a panic, the panic which soldiers know in battle. I seized the three packets of letters on the open desk, ran from the room, dashed down the stairs four steps at a time, found myself outside, I know not how, and, perceiving my horse a few steps off, leaped into the saddle and galloped away.

"I stopped only when I reached Rouen and alighted at my lodgings. Throwing the reins to my orderly, I fled to my room and shut myself in to reflect. For an hour I anxiously asked myself if I were not the victim of a hallucination. Undoubtedly I had had one of those incomprehensible nervous attacks, those exaltations of mind that give rise to visions and are the stronghold of the supernatural. And I was about to believe I had seen a vision, had a hallucination, when, as I approached the window, my eyes fell, by chance, upon my breast. My military cape was covered with long black hairs! One

by one, with trembling fingers, I plucked them off and threw them away.

"I then called my orderly. I was too disturbed, too upset to go and see my friend that day, and I also wished to reflect more fully upon what I ought to tell him. I sent him his letters, for which he gave the soldier a receipt. He asked after me most particularly, and, on being told I was ill—had had a sunstroke—appeared exceedingly anxious. Next morning I went to him, determined to tell him the truth. He had gone out the evening before and had not yet returned. I called again during the day; my friend was still absent. After waiting a week longer without news of him, I notified the authorities and a judicial search was instituted. Not the slightest trace of his whereabouts or manner of disappearance was discovered.

"A minute inspection of the abandoned château revealed nothing of a suspicious character. There was no indication that a woman had been concealed there.

"After fruitless researches all further efforts were abandoned, and for fifty-six years I have heard nothing; I know no more than before."

CLOCHETTE

HOW strange those old recollections are which haunt us, without our being able to get rid of them!

This one is so very old that I cannot understand how it has clung so vividly and tenaciously to my memory. Since then I have seen so many sinister things, which were either affecting or terrible, that I am astonished at not being able to pass a single day without the face of Mother Bellflower recurring to my mind's eye, just as I knew her formerly, now so long ago, when I was ten or twelve years old.

She was an old seamstress who came to my parents' house once a week, every Thursday, to mend the linen. My parents lived in one of those country houses called *châteaux,* which are merely old houses with gable roofs, to which are attached three or four farms lying around them.

The village, a large village, almost a market town, was a few hundred yards away, closely circling the church, a red brick church, black with age.

Well, every Thursday Mother Clochette came between half-past six and seven in the morning, and went immediately into the linen-room and began to work. She was a tall, thin, bearded or rather hairy woman, for she had a beard all over her face, a

surprising, an unexpected beard, growing in improbable tufts, in curly bunches which looked as if they had been sown by a madman over that great face of a gendarme in petticoats. She had them on her nose, under her nose, round her nose, on her chin, on her cheeks; and her eyebrows, which were extraordinarily thick and long, and quite gray, bushy and bristling, looked exactly like a pair of mustaches stuck on there by mistake.

She limped, not as lame people generally do, but like a ship at anchor. When she planted her great, bony, swerving body on her sound leg, she seemed to be preparing to mount some enormous wave, and then suddenly she dipped as if to disappear in an abyss, and buried herself in the ground. Her walk reminded one of a storm, as she swayed about, and her head, which was always covered with an enormous white cap, whose ribbons fluttered down her back, seemed to traverse the horizon from north to south and from south to north, at each step.

I adored Mother Clochette. As soon as I was up I went into the linen-room where I found her installed at work, with a foot-warmer under her feet. As soon as I arrived, she made me take the foot-warmer and sit upon it, so that I might not catch cold in that large, chilly room under the roof.

"That draws the blood from your throat," she said to me.

She told me stories, whilst mending the linen with her long crooked nimble fingers; her eyes behind her magnifying spectacles, for age had impaired her sight, appeared enormous to me, strangely profound, double.

She had, as far as I can remember the things which she told me and by which my childish heart was moved, the large heart of a poor woman. She told me what had happened in the village, how a cow had escaped from the cow-house and had been found the next morning in front of Prosper Malet's windmill, looking at the sails turning, or about a hen's egg which had been found in the church belfry without any one being able to understand what creature had been there to lay it, or the story of Jean-Jean Pila's dog, who had been ten leagues to bring back his master's breeches which a tramp had stolen whilst they were hanging up to dry out of doors, after he had been in the rain. She told me these simple adventures in such a manner, that in my mind they assumed the proportions of never-to-be-forgotten dramas, of grand and mysterious poems; and the ingenious stories invented by the poets which my mother told me in the evening, had none of the flavor, none of the breadth or vigor of the peasant woman's narratives.

Well, one Tuesday, when I had spent all the morning in listening to Mother Clochette, I wanted to go upstairs to her again during the day after picking hazelnuts with the manservant in the wood behind the farm. I remember it all as clearly as what happened only yesterday.

On opening the door of the linen-room, I saw the old seamstress lying on the ground by the side of her chair, with her face to the ground and her arms stretched out, but still holding her needle in one hand and one of my shirts in the other. One of her legs in a blue stocking, the longer one, no doubt, was extended under her chair, and her spec-

tacles glistened against the wall, as they had rolled away from her.

I ran away uttering shrill cries. They all came running, and in a few minutes I was told that Mother Clochette was dead.

I cannot describe the profound, poignant, terrible emotion which stirred my childish heart. I went slowly down into the drawing-room and hid myself in a dark corner, in the depths of an immense old armchair, where I knelt down and wept. I remained there a long time, no doubt, for night came on. Suddenly somebody came in with a lamp, without seeing me, however, and I heard my father and mother talking with the medical man, whose voice I recognized.

He had been sent for immediately, and he was explaining the causes of the accident, of which I understood nothing, however. Then he sat down and had a glass of liqueur and a biscuit.

He went on talking, and what he then said will remain engraved on my mind until I die! I think that I can give the exact words which he used.

"Ah!" said he, "the poor woman! She broke her leg the day of my arrival here, and I had not even had time to wash my hands after getting off the diligence before I was sent for in all haste, for it was a bad case, very bad.

"She was seventeen, and a pretty girl, very pretty! Would any one believe it? I have never told her story before, and nobody except myself and one other person who is no longer living in this part of the country ever knew it. Now that she is dead, I may be less discreet.

"Just then a young assistant teacher came to

live in the village; he was a handsome, well-made fellow, and looked like a non-commissioned officer. All the girls ran after him, but he paid no attention to them, partly because he was very much afraid of his superior, the schoolmaster, old Grabu, who occasionally got out of bed the wrong foot first.

"Old Grabu already employed pretty Hortense who has just died here, and who was afterwards nicknamed Clochette. The assistant master singled out the pretty young girl, who was, no doubt, flattered at being chosen by this impregnable conqueror; at any rate, she fell in love with him, and he succeeded in persuading her to give him a first meeting in the hay-loft behind the school, at night, after she had done her day's sewing.

"She pretended to go home, but instead of going downstairs when she left the Grabus' she went upstairs and hid among the hay, to wait for her lover. He soon joined her, and was beginning to say pretty things to her, when the door of the hay-loft opened and the schoolmaster appeared, and asked: 'What are you doing up there, Sigisbert?' Feeling sure that he would be caught, the young schoolmaster lost his presence of mind and replied stupidly: 'I came up here to rest a little amongst the bundles of hay, Monsieur Grabu.'

"The loft was very large and absolutely dark, and Sigisbert pushed the frightened girl to the further end and said: 'Go over there and hide yourself. I shall lose my position, so get away and hide yourself.'

"When the schoolmaster heard the whispering, he continued: 'Why, you are not by yourself?' 'Yes, I am, Monsieur Grabu!' 'But you are not, for you

are talking.' 'I swear I am, Monsieur Grabu.' 'I will soon find out,' the old man replied, and double-locking the door, he went down to get a light.

"Then the young man, who was a coward such as one frequently meets, lost his head, and becoming furious all of a sudden, he repeated: 'Hide yourself, so that he may not find you. You will keep me from making a living for the rest of my life; you will ruin my whole career. Do hide yourself!' They could hear the key turning in the lock again, and Hortense ran to the window which looked out on the street, opened it quickly, and then said in a low and determined voice: 'You will come and pick me up when he is gone,' and she jumped out.

"Old Grabu found nobody, and went down again in great surprise, and a quarter of an hour later, Monsieur Sigisbert came to me and related his adventure. The girl had remained at the foot of the wall unable to get up, as she had fallen from the second story, and I went with him to fetch her. It was raining in torrents, and I brought the unfortunate girl home with me, for the right leg was broken in three places, and the bones had come through the flesh. She did not complain, and merely said, with admirable resignation: 'I am punished, well punished!'

"I sent for assistance and for the workgirl's relatives and told them a made-up story of a runaway carriage which had knocked her down and lamed her outside my door. They believed me, and the gendarmes for a whole month tried in vain to find the author of this accident.

"That is all! And I say that this woman was

a heroine and belonged to the race of those who accomplish the grandest deeds of history.

"That was her only love affair, and she died a virgin. She was a martyr, a noble soul, a sublimely devoted woman! And if I did not absolutely admire her, I should not have told you this story, which I would never tell any one during her life; you understand why."

The doctor ceased. Mamma cried and papa said some words which I did not catch; then they left the room and I remained on my knees in the arm-chair and sobbed, whilst I heard a strange noise of heavy footsteps and something knocking against the side of the staircase.

They were carrying away Clochette's body.

THE KISS

MY LITTLE DARLING: So you are crying from morning until night and from night until morning, because your husband leaves you; you do not know what to do and so you ask your old aunt for advice; you must consider her quite an expert. I don't know as much as you think I do, and yet I am not entirely ignorant of the art of loving, or, rather, of making one's self loved, in which you are a little lacking. I can admit that at my age.

You say that you are all attention, love, kisses and caresses for him. Perhaps that is the very trouble; I think you kiss him too much.

My dear, we have in our hands the most terrible power in the world: LOVE.

Man is gifted with physical strength, and he exercises force. Woman is gifted with charm, and she rules with caresses. It is our weapon, formidable and invincible, but we should know how to use it.

Know well that we are the mistresses of the world! To tell the history of Love from the beginning of the world would be to tell the history of man himself. Everything springs from it, the arts, great events, customs, wars, the overthrow of empires.

In the Bible you find Delila, Judith; in fables we find Omphale, Helen; in history the Sabines, Cleopatra and many others.

Therefore we reign supreme, all-powerful. But, like kings, we must make use of delicate diplomacy.

Love, my dear, is made up of imperceptible sensations. We know that it is as strong as death, but also as frail as glass. The slightest shock breaks it, and our power crumbles, and we are never able to raise it again.

We have the power of making ourselves adored, but we lack one tiny thing, the understanding of the various kinds of caresses. In embraces we lose the sentiment of delicacy, while the man over whom we rule remains master of himself, capable of judging the foolishness of certain words. Take care, my dear; that is the defect in our armor. It is our Achilles' heel.

Do you know whence comes our real power? From the kiss, the kiss alone! When we know how to hold out and give up our lips we can become queens.

The kiss is only a preface, however, but a charming preface. More charming than the realization itself. A preface which can always be read over again, whereas one cannot always read over the book.

Yes, the meeting of lips is the most perfect, the most divine sensation given to human beings, the supreme limit of happiness. It is in the kiss alone that one sometimes seems to feel this union of souls after which we strive, the intermingling of hearts, as it were.

Do you remember the verses of Sully-Prudhomme:

> Caresses are nothing but anxious bliss,
> Vain attempts of love to unite souls through a kiss.

THE KISS

One caress alone gives this deep sensation of two beings welded into one—it is the kiss. No violent delirium of complete possession is worth this trembling approach of the lips, this first moist and fresh contact, and then the long, lingering, motionless rapture.

Therefore, my dear, the kiss is our strongest weapon, but we must take care not to dull it. Do not forget that its value is only relative, purely conventional. It continually changes according to circumstances, the state of expectancy and the ecstasy of the mind. I will call attention to one example.

Another poet, François Coppée, has written a line which we all remember, a line which we find delightful, which moves our very hearts.

After describing the expectancy of a lover, waiting in a room one winter's evening, his anxiety, his nervous impatience, the terrible fear of not seeing her, he describes the arrival of the beloved woman, who at last enters hurriedly, out of breath, bringing with her part of the winter breeze, and he exclaims:

Oh! the taste of the kisses first snatched through the veil.

Is that not a line of exquisite sentiment, a delicate and charming observation, a perfect truth? All those who have hastened to a clandestine meeting, whom passion has thrown into the arms of a man, well do they know these first delicious kisses through the veil; and they tremble at the memory of them. And yet their sole charm lies in the circumstances, from being late, from the anxious expectancy, but from the purely—or, rather, impurely, if you prefer —sensual point of view, they are detestable.

Think! Outside it is cold. The young woman has

walked quickly; the veil is moist from her cold breath. Little drops of water shine in the lace. The lover seizes her and presses his burning lips to her liquid breath. The moist veil, which discolors and carries the dreadful odor of chemical dye, penetrates into the young man's mouth, moistens his mustache. He does not taste the lips of his beloved, he tastes the dye of this lace moistened with cold breath. And yet, like the poet, we would all exclaim:

Oh! the taste of the kisses first snatched through the veil.

Therefore, the value of this caress being entirely a matter of convention, we must be careful not to abuse it.

Well, my dear, I have several times noticed that you are very clumsy. However, you were not alone in that fault; the majority of women lose their authority by abusing the kiss with untimely kisses. When they feel that their husband or their lover is a little tired, at those times when the heart as well as the body needs rest, instead of understanding what is going on within him, they persist in giving inopportune caresses, tire him by the obstinacy of begging lips and give caresses lavished with neither rhyme nor reason.

Trust in the advice of my experience. First, never kiss your husband in public, in the train, at the restaurant. It is bad taste; do not give in to your desires. He would feel ridiculous and would never forgive you.

Beware of useless kisses lavished in intimacy. I am sure that you abuse them. For instance, I remember one day that you did something quite shocking. Probably you do not remember it.

All three of us were together in the drawing-room, and, as you did not stand on ceremony before me, your husband was holding you on his knees and kissing you at great length on the neck, the lips and throat. Suddenly you exclaimed: "Oh! the fire!" You had been paying no attention to it, and it was almost out. A few lingering embers were glowing on the hearth. Then he rose, ran to the woodbox, from which he dragged two enormous logs with great difficulty, when you came to him with begging lips, murmuring:

"Kiss me!" He turned his head with difficulty and tried to hold up the logs at the same time. Then you gently and slowly placed your mouth on that of the poor fellow, who remained with his neck out of joint, his sides twisted, his arms almost dropping off, trembling with fatigue and tired from his desperate effort. And you kept drawing out this torturing kiss, without seeing or understanding. Then when you freed him, you began to grumble: "How badly you kiss!" No wonder!

Oh, take care of that! We all have this foolish habit, this unconscious need of choosing the most inconvenient moments. When he is carrying a glass of water, when he is putting on his shoes, when he is tying his scarf—in short, when he finds himself in any uncomfortable position—then is the time which we choose for a caress which makes him stop for a whole minute in the middle of a gesture with the sole desire of getting rid of us!

Do not think that this criticism is insignificant. Love, my dear, is a delicate thing. The least little thing offends it; know that everything depends on

the tact of our caresses. An ill-placed kiss may do any amount of harm.

Try following my advice.

Your old aunt,

COLLETTE.

This story appeared in the Gaulois in November, 1882, under the pseudonym of "Maufrigneuse."

THE LEGION OF HONOR

HOW HE GOT THE LEGION OF HONOR

FROM the time some people begin to talk they seem to have an overmastering desire or vocation.

Ever since he was a child, M. Caillard had only had one idea in his head—to wear the ribbon of an order. When he was still quite a small boy he used to wear a zinc cross of the Legion of Honor pinned on his tunic, just as other children wear a soldier's cap, and he took his mother's hand in the street with a proud air, sticking out his little chest with its red ribbon and metal star so that it might show to advantage.

His studies were not a success, and he failed in his examination for Bachelor of Arts; so, not knowing what to do, he married a pretty girl, as he had plenty of money of his own.

They lived in Paris, as many rich middle-class people do, mixing with their own particular set, and proud of knowing a deputy, who might perhaps be a minister some day, and counting two heads of departments among their friends.

But M. Caillard could not get rid of his one absorbing idea, and he felt constantly unhappy because he had not the right to wear a little bit of colored ribbon in his buttonhole.

When he met any men who were decorated on the boulevards, he looked at them askance, with intense jealousy. Sometimes, when he had nothing to do in the afternoon, he would count them, and say to himself: "Just let me see how many I shall meet between the Madeleine and the Rue Drouot."

Then he would walk slowly, looking at every coat with a practiced eye for the little bit of red ribbon, and when he had got to the end of his walk he always repeated the numbers aloud.

"Eight officers and seventeen knights. As many as that! It is stupid to sow the cross broadcast in that fashion. I wonder how many I shall meet going back?"

And he returned slowly, unhappy when the crowd of passers-by interfered with his vision.

He knew the places where most were to be found. They swarmed in the Palais Royal. Fewer were seen in the Avenue de l'Opéra than in the Rue de la Paix, while the right side of the boulevard was more frequented by them than the left.

They also seemed to prefer certain cafés and theatres. Whenever he saw a group of white-haired old gentlemen standing together in the middle of the pavement, interfering with the traffic, he used to say to himself:

"They are officers of the Legion of Honor," and he felt inclined to take off his hat to them.

He had often remarked that the officers had a different bearing to the mere knights. They carried their head differently, and one felt that they enjoyed a higher official consideration and a more widely extended importance.

Sometimes, however, the worthy man would be

seized with a furious hatred for every one who was decorated; he felt like a Socialist toward them.

Then, when he got home, excited at meeting so many crosses—just as a poor, hungry wretch might be on passing some dainty provision shop—he used to ask in a loud voice:

"When shall we get rid of this wretched government?" And his wife would be surprised, and ask:

"What is the matter with you to-day?"

"I am indignant," he replied, "at the injustice I see going on around us. Oh, the Communards were certainly right!"

After dinner he would go out again and look at the shops where the decorations were sold, and he examined all the emblems of various shapes and colors. He would have liked to possess them all, and to have walked gravely at the head of a procession, with his crush hat under his arm and his breast covered with decorations, radiant as a star, amid a buzz of admiring whispers and a hum of respect.

But, alas! he had no right to wear any decoration whatever.

He used to say to himself: "It is really too difficult for any man to obtain the Legion of Honor unless he is some public functionary. Suppose I try to be appointed an officer of the Academy!"

But he did not know how to set about it, and spoke on the subject to his wife, who was stupefied.

"Officer of the Academy! What have you done to deserve it?"

He got angry. "I know what I am talking about. I only want to know how to set about it. You are quite stupid at times."

She smiled. "You are quite right. I don't understand anything about it."

An idea struck him: "Suppose you were to speak to M. Rosselin, the deputy; he might be able to advise me. You understand I cannot broach the subject to him directly. It is rather difficult and delicate, but coming from you it might seem quite natural."

Mme. Caillard did what he asked her, and M. Rosselin promised to speak to the minister about it; and then Caillard began to worry him, till the deputy told him he must make a formal application and put forward his claims.

"What were his charms?" he said. "He was not even a Bachelor of Arts."

However, he set to work and produced a pamphlet, with the title, "The People's Right to Instruction," but he could not finish it for want of ideas.

He sought for easier subjects, and began several in succession. The first was, "The Instruction of Children by Means of the Eye." He wanted gratuitous theatres to be established in every poor quarter of Paris for little children. Their parents were to take them there when they were quite young, and, by means of a magic lantern, all the notions of human knowledge were to be imparted to them. There were to be regular courses. The sight would educate the mind, while the pictures would remain impressed on the brain, and thus science would, so to say, be made visible. What could be more simple than to teach universal history, natural history, greography, botany, zoölogy, anatomy, etc., etc., in this manner?

He had his ideas printed in pamphlets, and sent

a copy to each deputy, ten to each minister, fifty to the President of the Republic, ten to each Parisian, and five to each provincial newspaper.

Then he wrote on "Street Lending-Libraries." His idea was to have little pushcarts full of books drawn about the streets. Everyone would have a right to ten volumes a month in his home on payment of one sou.

"The people," M. Caillard said, "will only disturb itself for the sake of its pleasures, and since it will not go to instruction, instruction must come to it," etc., etc.

His essays attracted no attention, but he sent in his application, and he got the usual formal official reply. He thought himself sure of success, but nothing came of it.

Then he made up his mind to apply personally. He begged for an interview with the Minister of Public Instruction, and he was received by a young subordinate, who was very grave and important, and kept touching the knobs of electric bells to summon ushers, and footmen, and officials inferior to himself. He declared to M. Caillard that his matter was going on quite favorably, and advised him to continue his remarkable labors, and M. Caillard set at it again.

M. Rosselin, the deputy, seemed now to take a great interest in his success, and gave him a lot of excellent, practical advice. He, himself, was decorated, although nobody knew exactly what he had done to deserve such a distinction.

He told Caillard what new studies he ought to undertake; he introduced him to learned societies which took up particularly obscure points of science,

in the hope of gaining credit and honors thereby; and he even took him under his wing at the ministry.

One day, when he came to lunch with his friend—for several months past he had constantly taken his meals there—he said to him in a whisper as he shook hands: "I have just obtained a great favor for you. The Committee of Historical Works is going to intrust you with a commission. There are some researches to be made in various libraries in France."

Caillard was so delighted that he could scarcely eat or drink, and a week later he set out. He went from town to town, studying catalogues, rummaging in lofts full of dusty volumes, and was hated by all the librarians.

One day, happening to be at Rouen, he thought he should like to go and visit his wife, whom he had not seen for more than a week, so he took the nine o'clock train, which would land him at home by twelve at night.

He had his latchkey, so he went in without making any noise, delighted at the idea of the surprise he was going to give her. She had locked herself in. How tiresome! However, he cried out through the door:

"Jeanne, it is I."

She must have been very frightened, for he heard her jump out of her bed and speak to herself, as if she were in a dream. Then she went to her dressing room, opened and closed the door, and went quickly up and down her room barefoot two or three times, shaking the furniture till the vases and glasses sounded. Then at last she asked:

"Is it you, Alexander?"

"Yes, yes," he replied; "make haste and open the door."

As soon as she had done so, she therw herself into his arms, exclaiming:

"Oh, what a fright! What a surprise! What a pleasure!"

He began to undress himself methodically, as he did everything, and took from a chair his overcoat, which he was in the habit of hanging up in the hall. But suddenly he remained motionless, struck dumb with astonishment—there was a red ribbon in the buttonhole!

"Why," he stammered, "this—this—this overcoat has got the ribbon in it!"

In a second, his wife threw herself on him, and, taking it from his hands, she said:

"No! you have made a mistake—give it to me."

But he still held it by one of the sleeves, without letting it go, repeating in a half-dazed manner:

"Oh! Why? Just explain—— Whose overcoat is it? It is not mine, as it has the Legion of Honor on it."

She tried to take it from him, terrified and hardly able to say:

"Listen—listen! Give it to me! I must not tell you! It is a secret. Listen to me!"

But he grew angry and turned pale.

"I want to know how this overcoat comes to be here? It does not belong to me."

Then she almost screamed at him:

"Yes, it does; listen! Swear to me—well—you are decorated!"

She did not intend to joke at his expense.

He was so overcome that he let the overcoat fall and dropped into an armchair.

"I am—you say I am—decorated?"

"Yes, but it is a secret, a great secret."

She had put the glorious garment into a cupboard, and came to her husband pale and trembling.

"Yes," she continued, "it is a new overcoat that I have had made for you. But I swore that I would not tell you anything about it, as it will not be officially announced for a month or six weeks, and you were not to have known till your return from your business journey. M. Rosselin managed it for you."

"Rosselin!" he contrived to utter in his joy. "He has obtained the decoration for me? He—— Oh!"

And he was obliged to drink a glass of water.

A little piece of white paper fell to the floor out of the pocket of the overcoat. Caillard picked it up; it was a visiting card, and he read out:

"Rosselin—Deputy."

"You see how it is," said his wife.

He almost cried with joy, and, a week later, it was announced in the *Journal Officiel* that M. Caillard had been awarded the Legion of Honor on account of his exceptional services.

THE ORPHAN

MADEMOISELLE SOURCE had adopted this boy under very sad circumstances. She was at the time thirty-six years old. Being disfigured through having as a child slipped off her nurse's lap into the fireplace and burned her face shockingly, she had determined not to marry, for she did not want any man to marry her for her money.

A neighbor of hers, left a widow just before her child was born, died in giving birth, without leaving a sou. Mademoiselle Source took the new-born child, put him out to nurse, reared him, sent him to a boarding-school, then brought him home in his fourteenth year, in order to have in her empty house somebody who would love her, who would look after her, and make her old age pleasant.

She had a little country place four leagues from Rennes, and she now dispensed with a servant; her expenses having increased to more than double since this orphan's arrival, her income of three thousand francs was no longer sufficient to support three persons.

She attended to the housekeeping and cooking herself, and sent out the boy on errands, letting him also occupy himself in cultivating the garden. He was gentle, timid, silent, and affectionate. And she experienced a deep happiness, a fresh happiness

when he kissed her without surprise or horror at her disfigurement. He called her "Aunt," and treated her as a mother.

In the evening they both sat down at the fireside, and she made nice little dainties for him. She heated some wine and toasted a slice of bread, and it made a charming little meal before going to bed. She often took him on her knees and covered him with kisses, murmuring tender words in his ear. She called him: "My little flower, my cherub, my adored angel, my divine jewel." He softly accepted her caresses, hiding his head on the old maid's shoulder. Although he was now nearly fifteen, he had remained small and weak, and had a rather sickly appearance.

Sometimes Mademoiselle Source took him to the city, to see two married female relatives of hers, distant cousins, who were living in the suburbs, and who were the only members of her family in existence. The two women had always found fault with her for having adopted this boy, on account of the inheritance; but for all that, they gave her a cordial welcome, having still hopes of getting a share for themselves, a third, no doubt, if what she possessed were only equally divided.

She was happy, very happy, always occupied with her adopted child. She bought books for him to improve his mind, and he became passionately fond of reading.

He no longer climbed on her knee to pet her as he had formerly done; but, instead, would go and sit down in his little chair in the chimney-corner and open a volume. The lamp placed at the edge of the little table above his head shone on his curly hair,

and on a portion of his forehead; he did not move, he did not raise his eyes or make any gesture. He read on, interested, entirely absorbed in the story he was reading.

Seated opposite to him, she would gaze at him earnestly, astonished at his studiousness, often on the point of bursting into tears.

She said to him occasionally: "You will fatigue yourself, my treasure!" hoping that he would raise his head, and come across to embrace her; but he did not even answer her; he had not heard or understood what she was saying; he paid no attention to anything save what he read in those pages.

For two years he devoured an incalculable number of volumes. His character changed.

After this, he asked Mademoiselle Source several times for money, which she gave him. As he always wanted more, she ended by refusing, for she was both methodical and decided, and knew how to act rationally when it was necessary to do so. By dint of entreaties he obtained a large sum from her one night; but when he begged her for more a few days later, she showed herself inflexible, and did not give way to him further, in fact.

He appeared to be satisfied with her decision.

He again became quiet, as he had formerly been, remaining seated for entire hours, without moving, plunged in deep reverie. He now did not even talk to Madame Source, merely answering her remarks with short, formal words. Nevertheless, he was agreeable and attentive in his manner toward her; but he never embraced her now.

She had by this time grown slightly afraid of him when they sat facing one another at night on

opposite sides of the fireplace. She wanted to wake him up, to make him say something, no matter what, that would break this dreadful silence, which was like the darkness of a wood. But he did not appear to listen to her, and she shuddered with the terror of a poor feeble woman when she had spoken to him five or six times successively without being able to get a word out of him.

What was the matter with him? What was going on in that closed-up head? When she had remained thus two or three hours opposite him, she felt as if she were going insane, and longed to rush away and to escape into the open country in order to avoid that mute, eternal companionship and also some vague danger, which she could not define, but of which she had a presentiment.

She frequently wept when she was alone. What was the matter with him? When she expressed a wish, he unmurmuringly carried it into execution. When she wanted anything brought from the city, he immediately went there to procure it. She had no complaint to make of him; no, indeed! And yet . . .

Another year flitted by, and it seemed to her that a fresh change had taken place in the mind of the young man. She perceived it; she felt it; she divined it. How? No matter! She was sure she was not mistaken; but she could not have explained in what manner the unknown thoughts of this strange youth had changed.

It seemed to her that, until now, he had been like a person in a hesitating frame of mind, who had suddenly arrived at a determination. This idea came to her one evening as she met his glance, a

fixed, singular glance which she had not seen in his face before.

Then he commenced to watch her incessantly, and she wished she could hide herself in order to avoid that cold eye riveted on her.

He kept staring at her, evening after evening, for hours together, only averting his eyes when she said, utterly unnerved:

"Do not look at me like that, my child!"

Then he would lower his head.

But the moment her back was turned she once more felt that his eyes were upon her. Wherever she went, he pursued her with his persistent gaze.

Sometimes, when she was walking in her little garden, she suddenly noticed him hidden behind a bush, as if he were lying in wait for her; and, again, when she sat in front of the house mending stockings while he was digging some vegetable bed, he kept continually watching her in a surreptitious manner, as he worked.

It was in vain that she asked him:

"What's the matter with you, my boy? For the last three years, you have become very different. I don't recognize you. Do tell me what ails you, and what you are thinking of."

He invariably replied, in a quiet, weary tone:

"Why, nothing ails me, aunt!"

And when she persisted:

"Ah! my child, answer me, answer me when I speak to you. If you knew what grief you caused me, you would always answer, and you would not look at me that way. Have you any trouble? Tell me! I'll comfort you!"

He went away, with a tired air, murmuring:

"But there is nothing the matter with me, I assure you."

He had not grown much, having always a childish look, although his features were those of a man. They were, however, hard and badly cut. He seemed incomplete, abortive, only half finished, and disquieting as a mystery. He was a self-contained, unapproachable being, in whom there seemed always to be some active, dangerous mental labor going on.

Mademoiselle Source was quite conscious of all this, and she could not sleep at night, so great was her anxiety. Frightful terrors, dreadful nightmares assailed her. She shut herself up in her own room, and barricaded the door, tortured by fear.

What was she afraid of? She could not tell.

She feared everything, the night, the walls, the shadows thrown by the moon on the white curtains of the windows, and, above all, she feared him.

Why?

What had she to fear? Did she know what it was?

She could live this way no longer! She felt certain that a misfortune threatened her, a frightful misfortune.

She set forth secretly one morning, and went into the city to see her relatives. She told them about the matter in a gasping voice. The two women thought she was going mad and tried to reassure her.

She said:

"If you knew the way he looks at me from morning till night. He never takes his eyes off me! At times, I feel a longing to cry for help, to call in the

neighbors, so much am I afraid. But what could I say to them? He does nothing but look at me."

The two female cousins asked:

"Is he ever brutal to you? Does he give you sharp answers?"

She replied:

"No, never; he does everything I wish; he works hard; he is steady; but I am so frightened that I care nothing for that. He is planning something, I am certain of that—quite certain. I don't care to remain all alone like that with him in the country."

The relatives, astonished at her words, declared that people would be amazed, would not understand; and they advised her to keep silent about her fears and her plans, without, however, dissuading her from coming to reside in the city, hoping in that way that the entire inheritance would eventually fall into their hands.

They even promised to assist her in selling her house, and in finding another, near them.

Mademoiselle Source returned home. But her mind was so much upset that she trembled at the slightest noise, and her hands shook whenever any trifling disturbance agitated her.

Twice she went again to consult her relatives, quite determined now not to remain any longer in this way in her lonely dwelling. At last, she found a little cottage in the suburbs, which suited her, and she privately bought it.

The signature of the contract took place on a Tuesday morning, and Mademoiselle Source devoted the rest of the day to the preparations for her change of residence.

At eight o'clock in the evening she got into the

diligence which passed within a few hundred yards of her house, and she told the conductor to put her down in the place where she usually alighted. The man called out to her as he whipped his horses:

"Good evening, Mademoiselle Source — good night!"

She replied as she walked on:

"Good evening, Père Joseph." Next morning, at half-past seven, the postman who conveyed letters to the village noticed at the cross-road, not far from the high road, a large splash of blood not yet dry. He said to himself: "Hallo! some boozer must have had a nose bleed."

But he perceived ten paces farther on a pocket handkerchief also stained with blood. He picked it up. The linen was fine, and the postman, in alarm, made his way over to the ditch, where he fancied he saw a strange object.

Mademoiselle Source was lying at the bottom on the grass, her throat cut with a knife.

An hour later, the gendarmes, the examining magistrate, and other authorities made an inquiry as to the cause of death.

The two female relatives, called as witnesses, told all about the old maid's fears and her last plans.

The orphan was arrested. After the death of the woman who had adopted him, he wept from morning till night, plunged, at least to all appearance, in the most violent grief.

He proved that he had spent the evening up to eleven o'clock in a café. Ten persons had seen him, having remained there till his departure.

The driver of the diligence stated that he had

set down the murdered woman on the road between half-past nine and ten o'clock.

The accused was acquitted. A will, drawn up a long time before, which had been left in the hands of a notary in Rennes, made him sole heir. So he inherited everything.

For a long time, the people of the country boycotted him, as they still suspected him. His house, that of the dead woman, was looked upon as accursed. People avoided him in the street.

But he showed himself so good-natured, so open, so familiar, that gradually these horrible doubts were forgotten. He was generous, obliging, ready to talk to the humblest about anything, as long as they cared to talk to him.

The notary, Maître Rameau, was one of the first to take his part, attracted by his smiling loquacity. He said at a dinner, at the tax collector's house:

"A man who speaks with such facility and who is always in good humor could not have such a crime on his conscience."

Touched by his argument, the others who were present reflected, and they recalled to mind the long conversations with this man who would almost compel them to stop at the road corners to listen to his ideas, who insisted on their going into his house when they were passing by his garden, who could crack a joke better than the lieutenant of the gendarmes himself, and who possessed such contagious gayety that, in spite of the repugnance with which he inspired them, they could not keep from always laughing in his company.

All doors were opened to him after a time.

He is to-day the mayor of his township.

THE BEGGAR

HE had seen better days, despite his present misery and infirmities.

At the age of fifteen both his legs had been crushed by a carriage on the Varville highway. From that time forth he begged, dragging himself along the roads and through the farmyards, supported by crutches which forced his shoulders up to his ears. His head looked as if it were squeezed in between two mountains.

A foundling, picked up out of a ditch by the priest of Les Billettes on the eve of All Saints' Day and baptized, for that reason, Nicholas Toussaint, reared by charity, utterly without education, crippled in consequence of having drunk several glasses of brandy given him by the baker (such a funny story!) and a vagabond all his life afterward—the only thing he knew how to do was to hold out his hand for alms.

At one time the Baroness d'Avary allowed him to sleep in a kind of recess spread with straw, close to the poultry yard in the farm adjoining the château, and if he was in great need he was sure of getting a glass of cider and a crust of bread in the kitchen. Moreover, the old lady often threw him a few pennies from her window. But she was dead now.

In the villages people gave him scarcely anything —he was too well known. Everybody had grown

tired of seeing him, day after day for forty years, dragging his deformed and tattered person from door to door on his wooden crutches. But he could not make up his mind to go elsewhere, because he knew no place on earth but this particular corner of the country, these three or four villages where he had spent the whole of his miserable existence. He had limited his begging operations and would not for worlds have passed his accustomed bounds.

He did not even know whether the world extended for any distance beyond the trees which had always bounded his vision. He did not ask himself the question. And when the peasants, tired of constantly meeting him in their fields or along their lanes, exclaimed: "Why don't you go to other villages instead of always limping about here?" he did not answer, but slunk away, possessed with a vague dread of the unknown—the dread of a poor wretch who fears confusedly a thousand things—new faces, taunts, insults, the suspicious glances of people who do not know him and the policemen walking in couples on the roads. These last he always instinctively avoided, taking refuge in the bushes or behind heaps of stones when he saw them coming.

When he perceived them in the distance, with uniforms gleaming in the sun, he was suddenly possessed with unwonted agility—the agility of a wild animal seeking its lair. He threw aside his crutches, fell to the ground like a limp rag, made himself as small as possible and crouched like a hare under cover, his tattered vestments blending in hue with the earth on which he cowered.

He had never had any trouble with the police, but

the instinct to avoid them was in his blood. He seemed to have inherited it from the parents he had never known.

He had no refuge, no roof for his head, no shelter of any kind. In summer he slept out of doors and in winter he showed remarkable skill in slipping unperceived into barns and stables. He always decamped before his presence could be discovered. He knew all the holes through which one could creep into farm buildings, and the handling of his crutches having made his arms surprisingly muscular he often hauled himself up through sheer strength of wrist into hay-lofts, where he sometimes remained for four or five days at a time, provided he had collected a sufficient store of food beforehand.

He lived like the beasts of the field. He was in the midst of men, yet knew no one, loved no one, exciting in the breasts of the peasants only a sort of careless contempt and smoldering hostility. They nicknamed him "Bell," because he hung between his two crutches like a church bell between its supports.

For two days he had eaten nothing. No one gave him anything now. Every one's patience was exhausted. Women shouted to him from their doorsteps when they saw him coming:

"Be off with you, you good-for-nothing vagabond! Why, I gave you a piece of bread only three days ago!"

And he turned on his crutches to the next house, where he was received in the same fashion.

The women declared to one another as they stood at their doors:

"We can't feed that lazy brute all the year round!"

And yet the "lazy brute" needed food every day.

He had exhausted Saint-Hilaire, Varville and Les Billettes without getting a single copper or so much as a dry crust. His only hope was in Tournolles, but to reach this place he would have to walk five miles along the highroad, and he felt so weary that he could hardly drag himself another yard. His stomach and his pocket were equally empty, but he started on his way.

It was December and a cold wind blew over the fields and whistled through the bare branches of the trees; the clouds careered madly across the black, threatening sky. The cripple dragged himself slowly along, raising one crutch after the other with a painful effort, propping himself on the one distorted leg which remained to him.

Now and then he sat down beside a ditch for a few moments' rest. Hunger was gnawing his vitals, and in his confused, slow-working mind he had only one idea—to eat—but how this was to be accomplished he did not know.

For three hours he continued his painful journey. Then at last the sight of the trees of the village inspired him with new energy.

The first peasant he met, and of whom he asked alms, replied:

"So it's you again, is it, you old scamp? Shall I never be rid of you?"

And "Bell" went on his way. At every door he got nothing but hard words. He made the round of the whole village, but received not a halfpenny for his pains.

Then he visited the neighboring farms, toiling through the muddy land, so exhausted that he could hardly raise his crutches from the ground. He met

with the same reception everywhere. It was one of those cold, bleak days, when the heart is frozen and the temper irritable, and hands do not open either to give money or food.

When he had visited all the houses he knew, "Bell" sank down in the corner of a ditch running across Chiquet's farmyard. Letting his crutches slip to the ground, he remained motionless, tortured by hunger, but hardly intelligent enough to realize to the full his unutterable misery.

He awaited he knew not what, possessed with that vague hope which persists in the human heart in spite of everything. He awaited in the corner of the farmyard, in the biting December wind, some mysterious aid from Heaven or from men, without the least idea whence it was to arrive. A number of black hens ran hither and thither, seeking their food in the earth which supports all living things. Every now and then they snapped up in their beaks a grain of corn or a tiny insect; then they continued their slow, sure search for nutriment.

"Bell" watched them at first without thinking of anything. Then a thought occurred rather to his stomach than to his mind—the thought that one of those fowls would be good to eat if it were cooked over a fire of dead wood.

He did not reflect that he was going to commit a theft. He took up a stone which lay within reach, and, being of skillful aim, killed at the first shot the fowl nearest to him. The bird fell on its side, flapping its wings. The others fled wildly hither and thither, and "Bell," picking up his crutches, limped across to where his victim lay.

Just as he reached the little black body with its

crimsoned head he received a violent blow in the back which made him let go his hold of his crutches and sent him flying ten paces distant. And Farmer Chiquet, beside himself with rage, cuffed and kicked the marauder with all the fury of a plundered peasant as "Bell" lay defenceless before him.

The farm hands came up also and joined their master in cuffing the lame beggar. Then when they were tired of beating him they carried him off and shut him up in the woodshed, while they went to fetch the police.

"Bell," half dead, bleeding and perishing with hunger, lay on the floor. Evening came—then night—then dawn. And still he had not eaten.

About midday the police arrived. They opened the door of the woodshed with the utmost precaution, fearing resistance on the beggar's part, for Farmer Chiquet asserted that he had been attacked by him and had had great difficulty in defending himself.

The sergeant cried:

"Come, get up!"

But "Bell" could not move. He did his best to raise himself on his crutches, but without success. The police, thinking his weakness feigned, pulled him up by main force and set him between the crutches.

Fear seized him—his native fear of a uniform, the fear of the game in presence of the sportsman, the fear of a mouse for a cat—and by the exercise of almost superhuman effort he succeeded in remaining upright.

"Forward!" said the sergeant. He walked. All the inmates of the farm watched his departure. The women shook their fists at him the men scoffed

at and insulted him. He was taken at last! Good riddance!

He went off between his two guards. He mustered sufficient energy—the energy of despair—to drag himself along until the evening, too dazed to know what was happening to him, too frightened to understand.

People whom he met on the road stopped to watch him go by and peasants muttered:

"It's some thief or other."

Toward evening he reached the country town. He had never been so far before. He did not realize in the least what he was there for or what was to become of him. All the terrible and unexpected events of the last two days, all these unfamiliar faces and houses struck dismay into his heart.

He said not a word, having nothing to say because he understood nothing. Besides, he had spoken to no one for so many years past that he had almost lost the use of his tongue, and his thoughts were too indeterminate to be put into words.

He was shut up in the town jail. It did not occur to the police that he might need food, and he was left alone until the following day.

But when in the early morning they came to examine him he was found dead on the floor. Such an astonishing thing!